

MONTANA EARLY LEARNING CHALLENGE

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EXHIBIT I – LEAD AGENCY SCOPE OF WORK

The Lead State Agency hereby agrees to participate in the State Plan, as described in the State’s application, and more specifically commits to undertake the tasks and activities described in detail below.

Selection Criterion	Participating Party	Type of Participation
Example Row— <i>shows an example of criterion (B)(1) for the State agency that oversees state-funded preschool, IDEA, and Head Start Collab Office</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>State-funded preschool</i> • <i>IDEA preschool special ed</i> • <i>Head Start Collab Office</i> 	<i>Representatives from each program are sitting on the state committee to define statewide QRIS program standards</i>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Head Start Collab Office</i> 	<i>Responsible for cross-walking Head Start performance standards with the new Program Standards</i>
Grant Administration	Montana Department of Public Health & Human Services	DPHHS staff will: 1. Work collaboratively with all Participating State Agencies and provide support in carrying out each agency’s scope of work; 2. When applicable, transfer or contract grant funds to Participating State Agencies to support activities in the state plan and specific scopes of work, all in accord with the overall grant budget; 3. Provide feedback to Participating State Agency’s status updates, interim reports, and project plans and products; 4. Keep participating agencies informed of the status of the RTT ELC project and gather input as appropriate through the governance structure related to grant activities; 5. Facilitate coordination across Participating State Agencies necessary to implement the State Plan; 6. Identify sources of technical assistance for the project; 7. Appoint key staff and a grant project manager for RTT ELC; 8. Maintain frequent communication to execute MOUs; 9. Work with Participating State Agency personnel to determine appropriate timelines for project status reports; 10. Negotiate in good faith toward achieving the goals of the RTT ELC grant, including modifications and scope of work changes; and 11. Take appropriate enforcement action as appropriate and determined by the Governance Structure, if needed when Participating

Selection Criterion	Participating Party	Type of Participation
		Agencies do not meet goals, timelines, budgets, targets, etc.
(A) Governance	Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services	<p>*Under the direction and in collaboration with the Governor's Office, DPHHS will:</p> <p>*Establish a Division of Early Childhood as the Governor's Office of Early Childhood;</p> <p>*Provide leadership, staff support, participate and facilitate administrative process for Best Beginnings Advisory Council, including formally connecting the Family Support Advisory Council to the Best Beginnings Advisory Council</p> <p>*Hire communications specialist and establish communication and outreach plans for RTT ELC projects.</p> <p>*Hire epidemiologist and business analyst to assist with data mapping and reporting cross sector and as lead agency</p> <p>*Hire needed staff consistent with the state plan</p> <p>*continue to support and expand BB community coalitions</p>
(B)(1)	Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services: Child Care Licensing CCDF State Child Care Administrator/STARS staff Part C staff	<p>*Revise regulations and increase monitoring for licensed and registered child care programs;</p> <p>*Implement licensing indicator system;</p> <p>*Link STAR 1 criteria to licensing & registration rules;</p> <p>*Work collaboratively with TQRIS staff to ensure effective communication about programs, procedures, and licensing issues</p> <p>* Revise TQRIS to include developmental screenings and other standards as determined by grant plan</p> <p>* Hire additional staff and secure needed contracts to continue infrastructure support, TQRIS administration, assessment, incentive supports, evaluation, in order to maintain program integrity.</p> <p>*contract for validation study of TQRIS/STARS</p> <p>* work with STARS staff to identify ways to partner Part C providers and child care providers using RBEI for identified kids</p> <p>*contract with Early Childhood Project for activities outlined in the state plan</p>
(B)(2)	Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services	<p>*Recruit and expand programs into TQRIS</p> <p>*Revise TQRIS criteria to include licensed and</p>

Selection Criterion	Participating Party	Type of Participation
	CCDF Administrator/STARS staff/policy staff/CFSD/Part C/Home Visiting/child care licensing /Head Start Collaboration/EC Systems	<p>registered programs, tribal child care, and Head Start/Early Head Start at STAR 1</p> <p>*Create referral process, policies, and tracking for referring identified high needs children to high quality child care or public preschool</p> <p>*Partner with OPI public preschool staff to support preschools in pursuit of accreditation and STAR 5, as well as use of ELS's</p> <p>*evaluate and adjust child care eligibility policies to assure policies support families access to upper tier level care (contract for slot)</p> <p>*Partner with Head Start, tribal programs related to inclusion in STARS</p> <p>**continue to adjust for affordable copayments and eligibility standards based on funding</p> <p>*continue provider reimbursement rates based on funding allocations</p>
(B)(3)	Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services STARS staff/child care licensing/ home visiting staff/Head Start collaboration/EC systems	<p>*continue to contract and monitor reliability for assessors</p> <p>*continue to assure enough assessors are available</p> <p>*contract to maintain electronic data in Branagh (sole source)</p> <p>*provide train the trainer events related to ASQ-3™ and ASQ:SE</p> <p>*enhance transparent web portal for</p> <p>*continue to work with STARS programs in marketing</p>
(B)(4)	Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services STARS staff/home visiting/ Part C/ Child and Family Services/policy staff/Head Start Collaboration/EC Systems Staff	<p>*continue to contract for training and technical assistance</p> <p>*continue incentives</p> <p>*build referral policies for programs serving high needs children and referral tracking processes</p> <p>*establish program policies to encourage top tier placement of high needs children in TQRIS facilities or public preschools</p>
(B)(5)	Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services STARS staff	*contract with TQRIS field test evaluator to conduct validation study of STARS
(C)(1)	Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services STARS staff/CCDF administrator/Head Start State Collaboration/EC Systems Staff	*work in partnership with OPI staff on developing a cross walk document for alignment of ELS to K-3 standards and in creating family engagement strategies using ELS's based on OPI's literacy kits for families

Selection Criterion	Participating Party	Type of Participation
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *contract with ECP to develop training on ELS and informing assessment and curriculum *distribute newly revised ELS's *work with cross sector providers, including libraries to understand and support families in use of ELS strategies for family engagement.
(C)(2)	Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services	N/A Montana did not choose this selection criteria
(C)(3)	<p>Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services</p> <p>STARS staff/Part C/ Home Visiting/CFSD/Children's Mental Health/EPSDT staff/NAPA/ Head Start Collaboration/EC Systems staff</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *work with stakeholders to identify how ASQ-3™ and ASQ:SE will be used in each sector *train on ASQ-3™ and ASQ:SE cross sector *implement ASQ-3™ and ASQ:SE consistent with state plan and additional if need *develop MOA's to share confidential information *identify data tracking mechanism for ASQ-3™ and ASQ:SE *identify and implement consistent Child Find practices throughout the State in partnership with OPI *develop and disseminate Nutrition and Physical Activity Guidelines
(C)(4)	<p>Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services</p> <p>BBAC staff/Administrators/Part C/CFSD/Head Start Collaboration/EC Systems staff</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *work through the BBAC to formalize a Family Support Network *contract with ECP to establish the Montana Family Engagement Framework and to include Family Support Specialists in the Montana early Childhood Practitioner Registry *Work with OPI in creating family engagement strategies using ELS's based on OPI's literacy kits for families * build referral policies for programs serving high needs children and referral tracking processes *CFSD, Part C and home visiting refer children who need child care to STARS facilities
(D)(1)	<p>Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services</p> <p>STARS staff/ CCDF/Part C/home visiting/Head Start</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *contract with ECP for identified activities in state plan *partner with ECP, OCHE, and OPI on expansion of credentials *implement incentive for Apprenticeship

Selection Criterion	Participating Party	Type of Participation
	collaboration/EC Systems Staff/Apprenticeship staff/licensing	program and continue incentives for Infant Toddler and Preschool Certification *look at other creative incentive strategies *evaluate and pursue licensing standards to include registry requirements
(D)(2)	Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services CCDF Administrator/Part C/Home Visiting/	*contract and partner with ECP to implement statewide TA system and coaching framework *continue to offer incentives for professional development *continue contracting for CITC and CPTC courses to be offered *continue Apprenticeship program, actively recruit and implement stipend *expand the number of qualified coaches *contract with ECP for career advising *contract for TA and coaching services *identify cross sector PD and coach strategies *contract with ECP for facilitation of the EC Higher Education Consortium *contract for other state plan activities
(E)(1)	Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services EC Systems staff/CCDF administrator/Head Start Collaboration/STARS staff	*partner with OPI in developing and supporting KEA, including data *work with local community coalition to partner with LEA on transition profiles *look at program policies to include transition profile activities as part of supporting children into kindergarten *support conferences and gatherings of stakeholders for KEA development
(E)(2)	Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services	N/A Montana did not choose this selection criteria

(b)(6)

Signature (*Authorized Representative of Lead Agency*)

Date

PARTICIPATING STATE AGENCY MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

This Memorandum of Understanding (“MOU”) is entered into by and between **Department of Health and Human Services** (“Lead Agency”) and **the Montana Office of Public Instruction** (“Participating State Agency”). The purpose of this agreement is to establish a framework of collaboration, as well as articulate specific roles and responsibilities in support of the State in its implementation of an approved Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge grant project.

I. ASSURANCES

The Participating State Agency hereby certifies and represents that it:

- 1) Agrees to be a Participating State Agency and will implement those portions of the State Plan indicated in Exhibit I, if the State application is funded;
- 2) Agrees to use, to the extent applicable and consistent with the State Plan and Exhibit I:
 - (a) A set of statewide Early Learning and Development Standards;
 - (b) A set of statewide Program Standards;
 - (c) A statewide Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System; and
 - (d) A statewide Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework and progression of credentials.

(Please note that Participating State Agencies must provide these assurances in order for the State to be eligible for a Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge grant.)

- 3) Has all requisite power and authority to execute and fulfill the terms of this MOU;
- 4) Is familiar with the State’s Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge grant application and is supportive of and committed to working on all applicable portions of the State Plan;
- 5) Will provide a Final Scope of Work only if the State’s application is funded and will do so in a timely fashion but no later than 90 days after a grant is awarded; and will describe the Participating State Agency’s specific goals, activities, timelines, budgets, and key personnel (“Participating State Agency Plan”) in a manner that is consistent with the Preliminary Scope of Work (Exhibit I), with the Budget included in section VIII of the State Plan (including existing funds, if any, that the Participating State Agency is using for activities and services that help achieve the outcomes of the State Plan; and
- 6) Will comply with all of the terms of the Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge Grant, this agreement, and all applicable Federal and State laws and regulations, including laws and regulations applicable to the Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge program, and the applicable provisions of EDGAR (34 CFR Parts 75, 77, 79, 80, 82, 84, 86, 97, 98 and 99), and the suspension and debarment regulations in 2 CFR Part 3485.

II. PROJECT ADMINISTRATION

A. PARTICIPATING STATE AGENCY RESPONSIBILITIES

In assisting the Lead Agency in implementing the tasks and activities described in the State’s Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge grant application, the Participating State Agency will:

- 1) Implement the Participating State Agency Scope of Work as identified in Exhibit I of this agreement;
- 2) Abide by the governance structure outlined in the State Plan;

- 3) Abide by the Participating State Agency's Budget included in section VIII of the State Plan (including the existing funds from Federal, State, private and local sources, if any, that the Participating State Agency is using to achieve the outcomes in the RTT-ELC State Plan);
- 4) Actively participate in all relevant meetings or other events that are organized or sponsored by the State, by the U.S. Department of Education ("ED"), or by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services ("HHS");
- 5) Post to any Web site specified by the State, ED, or HHS, in a timely manner, all non-proprietary products and lessons learned developed using Federal funds awarded under the RTT-ELC grant;
- 6) Participate, as requested, in any evaluations of this grant conducted by the State, ED, or HHS;
- 7) Be responsive to State, ED, or HHS requests for project information including on the status of the project, project implementation, outcomes, and any problems anticipated or encountered, consistent with applicable local, State and Federal privacy laws.

B. LEAD AGENCY RESPONSIBILITIES

In assisting the Participating State Agencies in implementing their tasks and activities described in the State's Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge application, the Lead Agency will:

- 1) Work collaboratively with the Participating State Agency and support the Participating State Agency in carrying out the Participating State Agency Scope of Work, as identified in Exhibit I of this agreement;
- 2) Timely award the portion of Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge grant funds designated for the Participating State Agency in the State Plan during the course of the project period and in accordance with the Participating State Agency's Scope of Work, as identified in Exhibit I, and in accordance with the Participating State Agency's Budget, as identified in section VIII of the State's application;
- 3) Provide feedback on the Participating State Agency's status updates, any interim reports, and project plans and products;
- 4) Keep the Participating State Agency informed of the status of the State's Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge grant project and seek input from the Participating State Agency, where applicable, through the governance structure outlined in the State Plan;
- 5) Facilitate coordination across Participating State Agencies necessary to implement the State Plan; and
- 6) Identify sources of technical assistance for the project.

C. JOINT RESPONSIBILITIES

- 1) The Lead Agency and the Participating State Agency will each appoint a key contact person for the Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge grant.
- 2) These key contacts from the Lead Agency and the Participating State Agency will maintain frequent communication to facilitate cooperation under this MOU, consistent with the State Plan and governance structure.
- 3) Lead Agency and Participating State Agency personnel will work together to determine appropriate timelines for project updates and status reports throughout the grant period.
- 4) Lead Agency and Participating State Agency personnel will negotiate in good faith toward achieving the overall goals of the State's Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge grant, including when the State Plan requires modifications that affect the Participating State Agency, or when the Participating State Agency's Scope of Work requires modifications.

D. STATE RECOURSE IN THE EVENT OF PARTICIPATING STATE AGENCY'S FAILURE TO PERFORM

If the Lead Agency determines that the Participating State Agency is not meeting its goals, timelines, budget, or annual targets, or is in some other way not fulfilling applicable requirements, the Lead Agency will take appropriate enforcement action, which could include initiating a collaborative process by which to attempt to resolve the disagreements between the Lead Agency and the Participating State Agency, or

initiating such enforcement measures as are available to the Lead Agency, under applicable State or Federal law.

III. MODIFICATIONS

This Memorandum of Understanding may be amended only by written agreement signed by each of the parties involved, in consultation with ED.

IV. DURATION

This Memorandum of Understanding shall be effective, beginning with the date of the last signature hereon and, if a Race to the Top- Early Learning Challenge grant is received by the State, ending upon the expiration of the Race to the Top- Early Learning Challenge grant project period.

V. SIGNATURES

Authorized Representative of Lead Agency:

<div style="border: 1px solid black; height: 30px; width: 100%;"></div>	
Signature	Date
<div style="border: 1px solid black; height: 20px; width: 200px;"></div>	Director, Department of Health and Human Services
Print Name	Title

Authorized Representative of Participating State Agency:

<div style="border: 1px solid black; height: 40px; width: 100%;"></div>	
Signature	Date
<div style="border: 1px solid black; height: 20px; width: 100px;"></div>	<div style="border: 1px solid black; height: 20px; width: 80px;"></div>
Print Name	Superintendent of Public Instruction
	Title

EXHIBIT I – THE MONTANA OFFICE OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

(PARTICIPATING STATE AGENCY) SCOPE OF WORK

The Participating State Agency hereby agrees to participate in the State Plan, as described in the State’s application, and more specifically commits to undertake the tasks and activities described in detail below.

Selection Criterion	Participating Party/OPI	Type of Participation
(B)(1)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EOE, Title I • IDEA preschool special ed • Preschool RTI/MBI special ed • Indian Education • Educator Licensure • Accreditation • DPHHS 	Representatives from each division are participating on the state advisory board to align and improve statewide Montana TQRIS program standards.
		Representatives from each division are participating on the state advisory board that will develop educator qualifications for public preschool programs.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EOE, Title I • IDEA preschool special ed • Preschool RTI/MBI special ed • Indian Education • Educator Licensure • Accreditation • Board of Public Education 	The OPI will work with the Board of Public Education to establish appropriate state accreditation standards for public Pre-K.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EOE, Title I 	Responsible for supporting the sub-grantee process for developing model Pre-K classrooms that will utilize Montana Early Learning Standards, a comprehensive program assessment system, family engagement strategies, health promotion, effective data practices.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EOE, Title I • IDEA preschool special ed • Preschool RTI/MBI special ed • Indian Education 	Responsible for partnering for training of public preschools to collaboratively develop model Pre-K classrooms that will utilize Montana Early Learning Standards, a comprehensive program assessment system, family engagement strategies, health promotion, effective data practices.
(B)(2)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EOE, Title I • IDEA preschool special ed • Preschool RTI/MBI special ed • Indian Education • DPHHS 	Representatives from each division are participating on the state advisory board to align and improve statewide TQRIS program standards.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EOE, Title I • IDEA preschool special ed • Preschool RTI/MBI special ed • Indian Education • Educator Licensure 	Build capacity to implement public preschool to serve every 4 year old in the State through the development of model preschool classrooms within sub-grant process.

Selection Criterion	Participating Party/OPI	Type of Participation
(B)(3)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accreditation 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EOE, Title I • IDEA preschool special ed • Preschool RTI/MBI special ed • Indian Education • Educator Licensure • Accreditation • DPHHS 	<p>Responsible for informing Early Childhood Educators about the TQRIS program standards and provide training that will allow them to achieve highest level possible.</p> <p>Responsible for informing parents and communities about the TQRIS program standards.</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EOE, Title I • IDEA preschool special ed • Preschool RTI/MBI special ed • Indian Education • DPHHS 	Collaboratively provide train the trainer events related to ASQ-3™ and ASQ:SE with DPHHS.
(B)(4)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EOE, Title I • IDEA preschool special ed • Preschool RTI/MBI special ed • Indian Education • Educator Licensure • Accreditation • DPHHS 	Responsible for collaborating within the agency and partnering with other state agencies in assisting children and families of preschool children with high needs including tribal communities, those receiving special education services through Part B, Section 619 of IDEA, and those who attend public preschool classrooms.
		Responsible for collaborating within the agency and partnering with other state agencies in assisting children and families of preschool children with high needs including tribal communities, those receiving special education services through Part B, Section 619 of IDEA, and those who attend public preschool classrooms with preparation for and transition into kindergarten.
(B)(5)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EOE, Title I • IDEA preschool special ed • Preschool RTI/MBI special ed • Indian Education • Educator Licensure • Accreditation • DPHHS • BBAC 	Representatives from each division are participating on the state advisory board to align and improve statewide Montana TQRIS program standards.
		Committed to collaboration with partnering state agencies to implement the quality assessments (e.g., CLASS scores) and outcome measures (e.g., direct child assessments) as well as stakeholder (coach, Early Childhood-system practitioners and educators, provider/teacher, and parent) assessments that will be used in the validation study of the TQRIS.

Selection Criterion	Participating Party/OPI	Type of Participation
(C)(1)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EOE, Title I • IDEA preschool special ed • Preschool RTI/MBI special ed • Indian Education • DPHHS 	Work in partnership with DPHHS staff to create family engagement strategies using ELS's based on the ERF model including family literacy kits.
		Work with cross sector providers, including libraries to understand and support families in use of ELS strategies for family engagement.
		Inform preschool teachers and families about the MT ELSs and K-3 MCCS so they know what children need to know, understand, and be able to do by the time they reach kindergarten.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EOE, Title I • IDEA preschool special ed • Preschool RTI/MBI special ed • Indian Education • Career and Technical Ed • DPHHS • ECP • OCHE 	Partner with ECP, OCHE, and DPHHS to align workforce development and planned Kindergarten Entry Assessment (KEA).
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EOE, Title I • IDEA preschool special ed • Preschool RTI/MBI special ed • Indian Education • DPHHS 	<p>Complete alignment of the ELS's and essential domains of school readiness with OPI's standards in the Physical Development and Health, Social and Emotional Development, and Approaches to Learning Essential Domains of School Readiness.</p> <p>Identify curriculum and research-based resources and baseline and progress measures for the benchmarks in the new ELS aligned to the Essential Domains of School Readiness.</p>
(C)(3)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EOE, Title I • IDEA preschool special ed • Preschool RTI/MBI special ed • Indian Education • Head Start State Collaborative Office 	Provide training and support for implementing ASQ-3™ and ASQ:SE in LEA and Head Start classrooms.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EOE, Title I • IDEA preschool special ed • Preschool RTI/MBI special ed • Indian Education • Health Enhancement and Safety • Head Start State Collaborative Office 	Provide training and support to preschool LEA's and Head Start programs for promoting healthy eating habits, ensuring that developmental needs are met, and supporting social and emotional development.
(C)(4)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EOE, Title I 	Partner with DPHHS to create family

Selection Criterion	Participating Party/OPI	Type of Participation
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IDEA preschool special ed • Preschool RTI/MBI special ed • Indian Education • DPHHS 	engagement strategies using MT ELS's based on ERF model including family literacy kits. Provide training and support for implementing family engagement strategies in LEA and Head Start classrooms.
(D)(1)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EOE, Title I • IDEA preschool special ed • Preschool RTI/MBI special ed • Indian Education • Educator Licensure • Accreditation • Career and Technical Ed • DPHHS • OCHE • ECP 	Partner with ECP, OCHE, and DPHHS on expansion and alignment of credentials and certification of preschool teachers.
(D)(2)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EOE, Title I • IDEA preschool special ed • Preschool RTI/MBI special ed • Indian Education • Career and Technical Ed • DPHHS • ECP 	Partner with DPHHS to provide ongoing training and professional development on the five Essential Domains of School Readiness to early educators to improve their knowledge, skills, and abilities to address the needs of children with high needs.
(E)(1)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EOE, Title I • IDEA preschool special ed • Preschool RTI/MBI special ed • Indian Education • Measurement and Accountability • DPHHS 	Partner with DPHHS in developing and supporting KEA, including data collection through GEMS as a "sandbox" option.

(b)(6)

Signature (Authorized Representative of Lead Agency)

Date

(b)(6)

Signature (Authorized Representative of Participating State Agency)

Date

PARTICIPATING STATE AGENCY MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

This Memorandum of Understanding (“MOU”) is entered into by and between the **Montana Department of Health and Human Services** (“Lead Agency”) and **the Montana University System** (“Participating State Agency”). The purpose of this agreement is to establish a framework of collaboration, as well as articulate specific roles and responsibilities in support of the State in its implementation of an approved Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge grant project.

I. ASSURANCES

The Participating State Agency hereby certifies and represents that it:

- 1) Agrees to be a Participating State Agency and will implement those portions of the State Plan indicated in Exhibit I, if the State application is funded;
- 2) Agrees to use, to the extent applicable and consistent with the State Plan and Exhibit I:
 - (a) A set of statewide Early Learning and Development Standards;
 - (b) A set of statewide Program Standards;
 - (c) A statewide Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System; and
 - (d) A statewide Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework and progression of credentials.

(Please note that Participating State Agencies must provide these assurances in order for the State to be eligible for a Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge grant.)

- 3) Has all requisite power and authority to execute and fulfill the terms of this MOU;
- 4) Is familiar with the State’s Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge grant application and is supportive of and committed to working on all applicable portions of the State Plan;
- 5) Will provide a Final Scope of Work only if the State’s application is funded and will do so in a timely fashion but no later than 90 days after a grant is awarded; and will describe the Participating State Agency’s specific goals, activities, timelines, budgets, and key personnel (“Participating State Agency Plan”) in a manner that is consistent with the Preliminary Scope of Work (Exhibit I), with the Budget included in section VIII of the State Plan (including existing funds, if any, that the Participating State Agency is using for activities and services that help achieve the outcomes of the State Plan; and
- 6) Will comply with all of the terms of the Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge Grant, this agreement, and all applicable Federal and State laws and regulations, including laws and regulations applicable to the Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge program, and the applicable provisions of EDGAR (34 CFR Parts 75, 77, 79, 80, 82, 84, 86, 97, 98 and 99), and the suspension and debarment regulations in 2 CFR Part 3485.

II. PROJECT ADMINISTRATION

A. PARTICIPATING STATE AGENCY RESPONSIBILITIES

In assisting the Lead Agency in implementing the tasks and activities described in the State’s Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge grant application, the Participating State Agency will:

- 1) Implement the Participating State Agency Scope of Work as identified in Exhibit I of this agreement;
- 2) Abide by the governance structure outlined in the State Plan;

- 3) Abide by the Participating State Agency's Budget included in section VIII of the State Plan (including the existing funds from Federal, State, private and local sources, if any, that the Participating State Agency is using to achieve the outcomes in the RTT-ELC State Plan);
- 4) Actively participate in all relevant meetings or other events that are organized or sponsored by the State, by the U.S. Department of Education ("ED"), or by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services ("HHS");
- 5) Post to any Web site specified by the State, ED, or HHS, in a timely manner, all non-proprietary products and lessons learned developed using Federal funds awarded under the RTT-ELC grant;
- 6) Participate, as requested, in any evaluations of this grant conducted by the State, ED, or HHS;
- 7) Be responsive to State, ED, or HHS requests for project information including on the status of the project, project implementation, outcomes, and any problems anticipated or encountered, consistent with applicable local, State and Federal privacy laws.

B. LEAD AGENCY RESPONSIBILITIES

In assisting the Participating State Agencies in implementing their tasks and activities described in the State's Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge application, the Lead Agency will:

- 1) Work collaboratively with the Participating State Agency and support the Participating State Agency in carrying out the Participating State Agency Scope of Work, as identified in Exhibit I of this agreement;
- 2) Timely award the portion of Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge grant funds designated for the Participating State Agency in the State Plan during the course of the project period and in accordance with the Participating State Agency's Scope of Work, as identified in Exhibit I, and in accordance with the Participating State Agency's Budget, as identified in section VIII of the State's application;
- 3) Provide feedback on the Participating State Agency's status updates, any interim reports, and project plans and products;
- 4) Keep the Participating State Agency informed of the status of the State's Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge grant project and seek input from the Participating State Agency, where applicable, through the governance structure outlined in the State Plan;
- 5) Facilitate coordination across Participating State Agencies necessary to implement the State Plan; and
- 6) Identify sources of technical assistance for the project.

C. JOINT RESPONSIBILITIES

- 1) The Lead Agency and the Participating State Agency will each appoint a key contact person for the Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge grant.
- 2) These key contacts from the Lead Agency and the Participating State Agency will maintain frequent communication to facilitate cooperation under this MOU, consistent with the State Plan and governance structure.
- 3) Lead Agency and Participating State Agency personnel will work together to determine appropriate timelines for project updates and status reports throughout the grant period.
- 4) Lead Agency and Participating State Agency personnel will negotiate in good faith toward achieving the overall goals of the State's Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge grant, including when the State Plan requires modifications that affect the Participating State Agency, or when the Participating State Agency's Scope of Work requires modifications.

D. STATE RECOURSE IN THE EVENT OF PARTICIPATING STATE AGENCY'S FAILURE TO PERFORM

If the Lead Agency determines that the Participating State Agency is not meeting its goals, timelines, budget, or annual targets, or is in some other way not fulfilling applicable requirements, the Lead Agency will take appropriate enforcement action, which could include initiating a collaborative process by which to attempt to resolve the disagreements between the Lead Agency and the Participating State Agency, or

initiating such enforcement measures as are available to the Lead Agency, under applicable State or Federal law.

III. MODIFICATIONS

This Memorandum of Understanding may be amended only by written agreement signed by each of the parties involved, in consultation with ED.

IV. DURATION

This Memorandum of Understanding shall be effective, beginning with the date of the last signature hereon and, if a Race to the Top- Early Learning Challenge grant is received by the State, ending upon the expiration of the Race to the Top- Early Learning Challenge grant project period.

V. SIGNATURES

Authorized Representative of Lead Agency:

<div>(b)(6)</div>	
Signature	Date
<div>(b)(6)</div>	Director, DPHHS
Print Name	Title

Authorized Representative of Participating State Agency:

<div>(b)(6)</div>	<div>(b)(6)</div>
Signature	Date
<div>(b)(6)</div>	Montana Commissioner of Higher Education
Print Name	Title

EXHIBIT I – PARTICIPATING STATE AGENCY SCOPE OF WORK

The Participating State Agency hereby agrees to participate in the State Plan, as described in the State’s application, and more specifically commits to undertake the tasks and activities described in detail below.

Selection Criterion	Participating Party	Type of Participation
Example Row— <i>shows an example of criterion (B)(1) for the State agency that oversees state-funded preschool, IDEA, and Head Start Collab Office</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State-funded preschool • IDEA preschool special ed • Head Start Collab Office 	<i>Representatives from each program are sitting on the state committee to define statewide QRIS program standards</i>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Head Start Collab Office 	<i>Responsible for cross-walking Head Start performance standards with the new Program Standards</i>
(D)(1)	Montana University System	1. The Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education (OCHE) will coordinate meetings to address secondary to postsecondary pathways, dual credit, faculty professional development and status of current programs system- wide
(D)(1)	Montana University System BBAC	2. Conduct the Higher Education Inventory to map the status of Early Childhood (EC) higher Education in MT that includes all community, tribal and MUS institutions and report to results to Best Beginnings Advisory Council and other key stakeholders
(D)(1)	Montana University System ECP	3. Identify opportunities for development of college based PD and align with NAEYC Standards for ECE Teacher Preparation
(D)(1)	Montana University System ECP	4. Analyze gaps in approved non- credit bearing PD through ECP data reports and others to identify further cross-sector needs and opportunities for PD based on Knowledge Base
(D)(2)	Montana University System DPHHS	1. Implement the STARS Coaching Framework in a pilot phase
(D)(2)	Montana University System DPHHS	2. Evaluate effectiveness of system through data collection and reporting
(D)(2)	Montana University System MIECHV	3. Collaborate with MIECHV program to explore and develop a plan for cross-sector coaching through the Pyramid Model Partnership
(D)(2)	Montana University System	4. Examine feasibility of MT EC Coaching Credential
(D)(2)	Montana University System	5. Restore incentives for the CCDS Apprenticeship Program
(D)(2)	Montana University System	6. Develop a plan for publicly funded

Selection Criterion	Participating Party	Type of Participation
	BBAC	preschool programs and others to achieve compensation parity for EC
(D)(2)	Montana University System Head Start Collaborative Office	7. Create licensing rules and/or MOUs with tribal governments and Head Starts to allow access to incentive awards and scholarships
(D)(2)	Montana University System	8. Implement tuition and books scholarships for students in 2 year EC postsecondary programs
(D)(2)	Montana University System	9. Research loan forgiveness options for ECE
(D)(2)	Montana University System ECP OPI DPHHS	10. Employ a data specialist to use data from ECP Registry, OPI/ GEMS, CCUBS and other data systems to create meaningful reports to guide policy making and program development
(D)(2)	Montana University System ECP DPHHS OPI	11. Contract to conduct an EC Workforce Report
(D)(2)	Montana University System	12. Use national planning tools to align EC data to SLDS
(D)(2)	Montana University System ECP Part C MICHV	13. Explore customization of ECP Consultation Module to collect data on coaching, consultation and family support visits in Part C and home visiting and other sectors.
(D)(2)	Montana University System DPHHS ECP	14. Develop marketing and communication plan to raise statewide awareness of incentives, scholarships, awards and program to support ECE PD
(D)(2)	Montana University System ECP	15. Create robust career advising through post secondary institutions, ECP and other PD providers
(D)(2)	Montana University System	16. Develop new incentive options
(D)(2)	Montana University System ECP OPI	17. Develop and increase opportunities for rural communities through expanded online and distance education coursework
(D)(2)	Montana University System BBAC OPI ECP	18. Develop a collaborative Master's degree approach in Montana

(b)(6)

(b)(6)

Signature (Authorized Representative of Lead Agency)

Date

(b)(6)

(b)(6)

Signature (Authorized Representative of Participating State Agency)

Date

PARTICIPATING STATE AGENCY MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

This Memorandum of Understanding (“MOU”) is entered into by and between **Department of Public Health and Human Services** (“Lead Agency”) and **Montana State Library** (“Participating State Agency”). The purpose of this agreement is to establish a framework of collaboration, as well as articulate specific roles and responsibilities in support of the State in its implementation of an approved Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge grant project.

I. ASSURANCES

The Participating State Agency hereby certifies and represents that it:

- 1) Agrees to be a Participating State Agency and will implement those portions of the State Plan indicated in Exhibit I, if the State application is funded;
- 2) Agrees to use, to the extent applicable and consistent with the State Plan and Exhibit I:
 - (a) A set of statewide Early Learning and Development Standards;
 - (b) A set of statewide Program Standards;
 - (c) A statewide Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System; and
 - (d) A statewide Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework and progression of credentials.

(Please note that Participating State Agencies must provide these assurances in order for the State to be eligible for a Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge grant.)

- 3) Has all requisite power and authority to execute and fulfill the terms of this MOU;
- 4) Is familiar with the State’s Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge grant application and is supportive of and committed to working on all applicable portions of the State Plan;
- 5) Will provide a Final Scope of Work only if the State’s application is funded and will do so in a timely fashion but no later than 90 days after a grant is awarded; and will describe the Participating State Agency’s specific goals, activities, timelines, budgets, and key personnel (“Participating State Agency Plan”) in a manner that is consistent with the Preliminary Scope of Work (Exhibit I), with the Budget included in section VIII of the State Plan (including existing funds, if any, that the Participating State Agency is using for activities and services that help achieve the outcomes of the State Plan; and
- 6) Will comply with all of the terms of the Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge Grant, this agreement, and all applicable Federal and State laws and regulations, including laws and regulations applicable to the Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge program, and the applicable provisions of EDGAR (34 CFR Parts 75, 77, 79, 80, 82, 84, 86, 97, 98 and 99), and the suspension and debarment regulations in 2 CFR Part 3485.

II. PROJECT ADMINISTRATION

A. PARTICIPATING STATE AGENCY RESPONSIBILITIES

In assisting the Lead Agency in implementing the tasks and activities described in the State’s Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge grant application, the Participating State Agency will:

- 1) Implement the Participating State Agency Scope of Work as identified in Exhibit I of this agreement;
- 2) Abide by the governance structure outlined in the State Plan;
- 3) Abide by the Participating State Agency’s Budget included in section VIII of the State Plan (including the existing funds from Federal, State, private and local sources, if any, that the Participating State Agency is using to achieve the outcomes in the RTT-ELC State Plan);

- 4) Actively participate in all relevant meetings or other events that are organized or sponsored by the State, by the U.S. Department of Education (“ED”), or by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (“HHS”);
- 5) Post to any Web site specified by the State, ED, or HHS, in a timely manner, all non-proprietary products and lessons learned developed using Federal funds awarded under the RTT-ELC grant;
- 6) Participate, as requested, in any evaluations of this grant conducted by the State, ED, or HHS;
- 7) Be responsive to State, ED, or HHS requests for project information including on the status of the project, project implementation, outcomes, and any problems anticipated or encountered, consistent with applicable local, State and Federal privacy laws.

B. LEAD AGENCY RESPONSIBILITIES

In assisting the Participating State Agencies in implementing their tasks and activities described in the State’s Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge application, the Lead Agency will:

- 1) Work collaboratively with the Participating State Agency and support the Participating State Agency in carrying out the Participating State Agency Scope of Work, as identified in Exhibit I of this agreement;
- 2) Timely award the portion of Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge grant funds designated for the Participating State Agency in the State Plan during the course of the project period and in accordance with the Participating State Agency’s Scope of Work, as identified in Exhibit I, and in accordance with the Participating State Agency’s Budget, as identified in section VIII of the State’s application;
- 3) Provide feedback on the Participating State Agency’s status updates, any interim reports, and project plans and products;
- 4) Keep the Participating State Agency informed of the status of the State’s Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge grant project and seek input from the Participating State Agency, where applicable, through the governance structure outlined in the State Plan;
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D. STATE RECOURSE IN THE EVENT OF PARTICIPATING STATE AGENCY’S FAILURE TO PERFORM

If the Lead Agency determines that the Participating State Agency is not meeting its goals, timelines, budget, or annual targets, or is in some other way not fulfilling applicable requirements, the Lead Agency will take appropriate enforcement action, which could include initiating a collaborative process by which to attempt to resolve the disagreements between the Lead Agency and the Participating State Agency, or initiating such enforcement measures as are available to the Lead Agency, under applicable State or Federal law.

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This Memorandum of Understanding shall be effective, beginning with the date of the last signature hereon and, if a Race to the Top- Early Learning Challenge grant is received by the State, ending upon the expiration of the Race to the Top- Early Learning Challenge grant project period.

V. SIGNATURES

Authorized Representative of Lead Agency:

(b)(6)	(b)(6)
Signature	Date
(b)(6)	(b)(6)
Print Name	Title

Authorized Representative of Participating State Agency:

(b)(6)	(b)(6)
Signature	Date
(b)(6)	(b)(6)
Print Name	Title

EXHIBIT I – PARTICIPATING STATE AGENCY SCOPE OF WORK

The Participating State Agency hereby agrees to participate in the State Plan, as described in the State’s application, and more specifically commits to undertake the tasks and activities described in detail below.

Selection Criterion	Participating Party	Type of Participation
(C)(1)	Montana State Library (MSL) DPHHS	MSL will develop programs and services for libraries to implement locally that are designed for children, parents, and caregivers. Programs will be age-appropriate and appealing for children, will model positive behaviors families in which families can engage in to develop early learning skills in their children, and will meet the state’s early learning plan and Early Learning Standards as determined by the community level needs assessments and strategic plans.
(C)(1)	Montana State Library BBAC	MSL will participate on the statewide Best Beginnings Advisory Council (BBAC) and will continue to advise the BBAC on new and innovative ways libraries can serve as conduits of early learning using the state’s early learning plan and Early Learning Standards to local communities.
(C)(4)	Montana State Library DPHHS OPI OCHE	MSL will encourage libraries to be resources for professional development for early learning in their local communities. This will be accomplished by coordinating with DPHHS, OPI and OCHE “train the trainer” workshops designed to help parents and caregivers understand the value of language and literacy and how to model positive early learning opportunities for their children.
(C)(4)	Montana State Library DPHHS BBAC	MSL will build capacity of librarians to play leadership roles in their communities’ early literacy efforts by assisting librarians with making connections to the resources that exist within their local communities that serve Montanans from birth to five years old, including their local advisory councils.
(C)(4)	Montana State Library DPHHS	MSL will educate Montana librarians about the latest in early learning research by conducting trainings – both in person and online – for librarians demonstrating how to incorporate the latest in early learning research into their programming and training for parents and caregivers offered at the library.

(b)(6)

Signature (*Authorized Representative of Lead Agency*)

(b)(6)

Date

Authorized Representative of Participating State Agency:

(b)(6)

Signature

(b)(6)

Date



Department of Public Health and Human Services

Director's Office ♦ PO Box 4210 ♦ Helena, MT 59620 ♦ (406) 444-5622 ♦ Fax: (406) 444-1970 ♦ www.dphhs.mt.gov

September 30, 2013

(b)(6)

Governor

(b)(6)

Director

Siri Smillie
Policy Advisor
Office of the Governor
State Capitol
Helena MT 59601

Dear Siri:

I am fully supportive of the Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge grant. In my absence I authorize Bob Runkel to sign documents on my behalf. Thank you for your efforts on this important project.

Sincerely,

(b)(6)

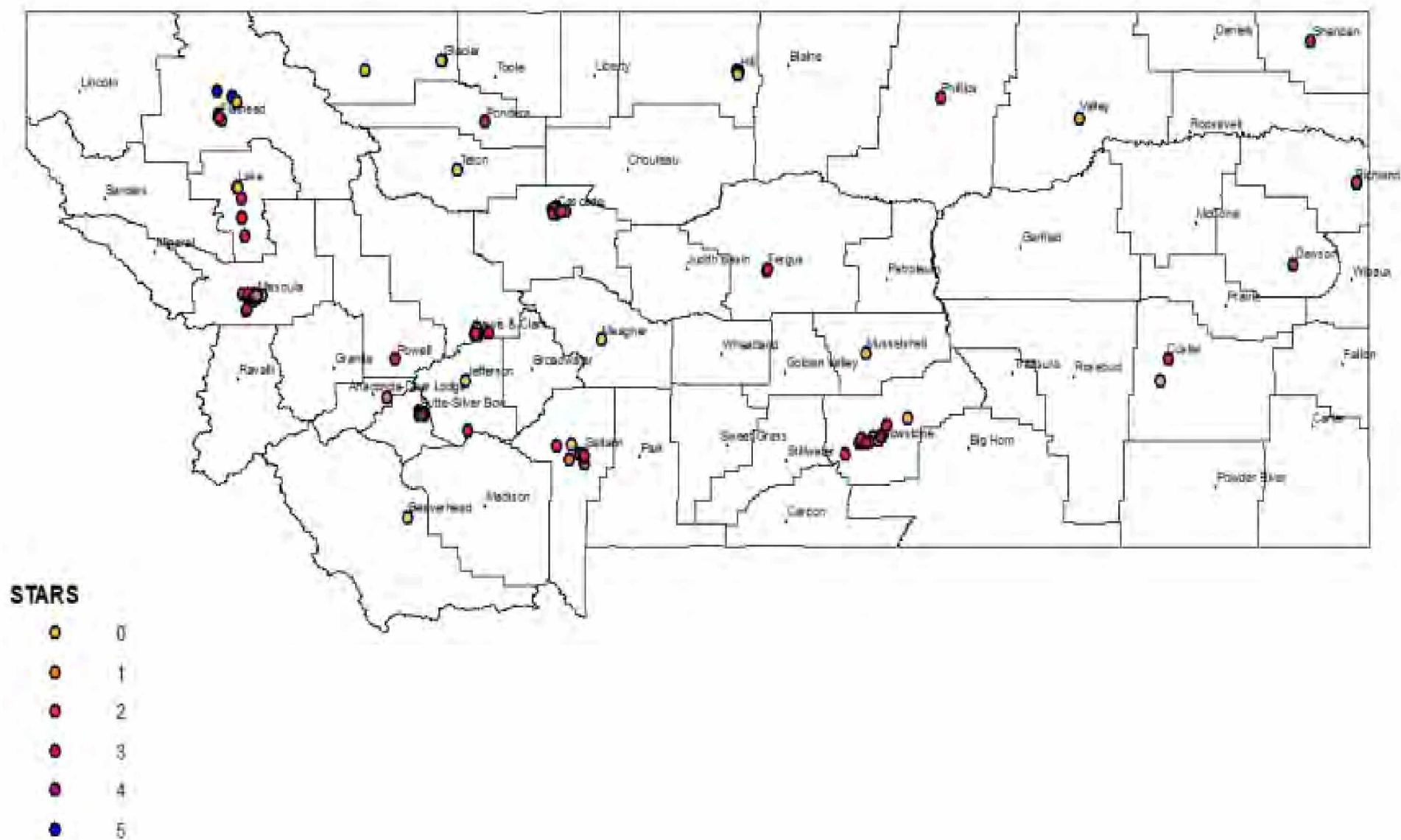
Director

History of Montana's Early Childhood Systems

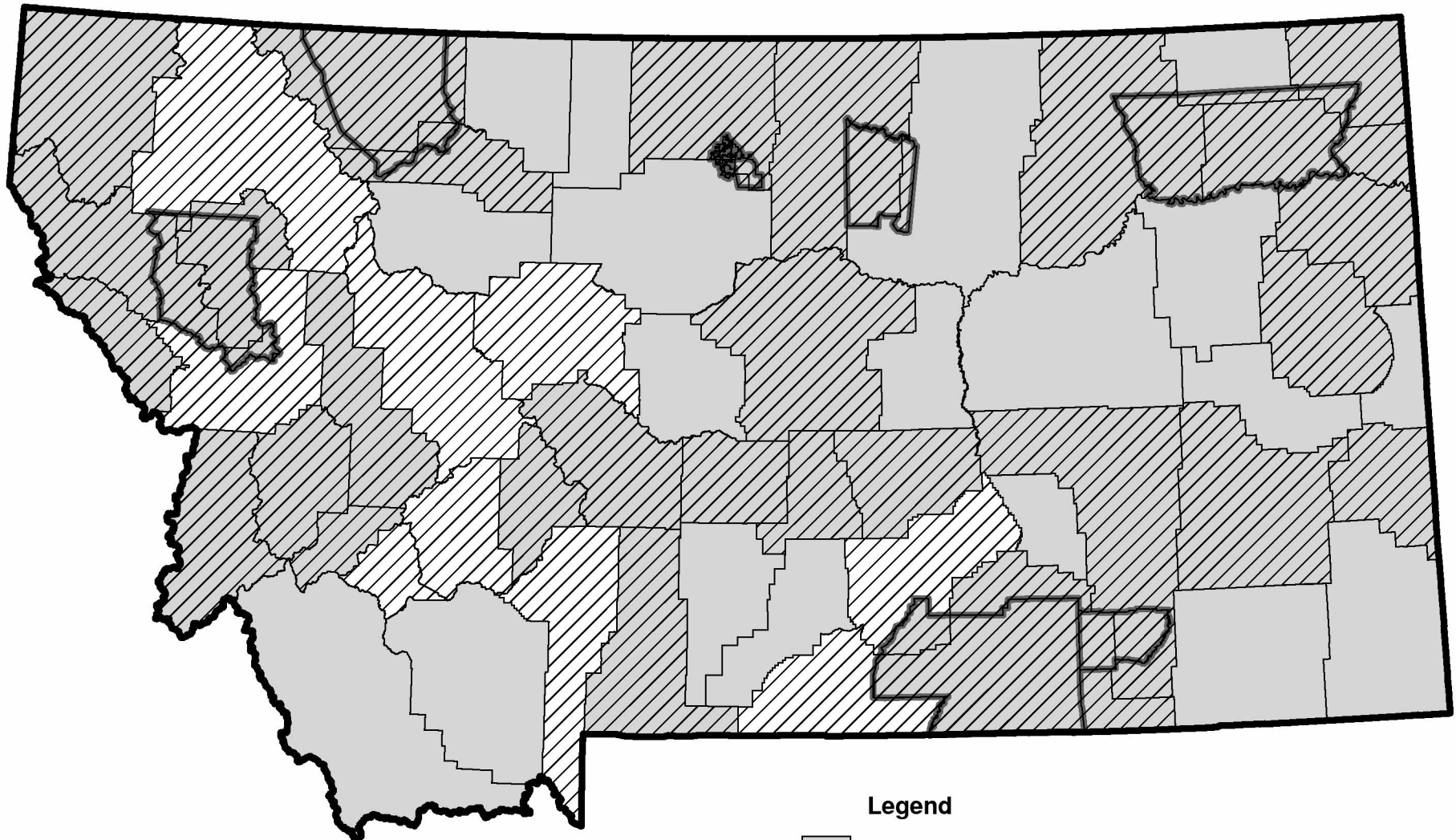


1965	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Montana's first Head Start programs began serving children & families. • Montana began licensing child care facilities.
1972	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Montana passes new state constitution, with Article X, Section 1(2) "The state recognizes the distinct and unique cultural heritage of American Indians and is committed in its educational goals to the preservation of their cultural integrity."
1989	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Montana Child Care Act passed to promote the availability and quality of child care in Montana.
1991	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Montana passed legislation mandating access to part-day kindergarten. A similar bill was defeated in 1989.
1996	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Montana Early Childhood Advisory Council (MECAC) created to advise the state on child care, early childhood, CACFP, and Head Start.
2003	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Montana Family and Community Health Bureau received the Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems Grant from Health Resources Services Administration. This was the first formal attempt to collaborate with the Early Childhood Services Bureau to co-administer the grant. Problems surfaced quickly related to philosophy, communication, and strategic planning.
2005	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Montana funded "Indian Education for All" for the first time. • Montana's Dane's Law passed, making it a felony to administer medication to a child in child care without a signed consent form. The bill was named for Dane Heggem who died from a Benadryl overdose administered by a day care provider.
2006	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Head Start State Collaboration Director managed both the Head Start Collaboration grant and the ECCS grant, as both had similar goals and priorities. As the early childhood systems collaboration strengthened, it became evident one person could not do both jobs and this was realigned. A great deal of valuable work has occurred as a result of the ECCS grant, and Montana credits the grant as the stimulus for our readiness today for the RTT ELC grant.
2007	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Montana passed full-day Kindergarten. Similar bills were defeated in 2005 & 2001.
2009	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Montana created a home and community-based service program for children diagnosed with autism aged 15 months through age 4.
2010	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Montana implemented Stars to Quality, a quality rating system for early childhood programs and professionals. • Office of Head Start provided funding and language in the Head Start Act with provisions for a statewide early childhood advisory council. Montana wrote the grant and developed the "Best Beginnings" Advisory Council aligned with the pillars of the Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems grants: health, mental health, family support & parent education, & early care & education.
2011	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Montana received funding for the State Advisory Council grant. The DPHHS Family and Community Bureau successfully applied for the MIECHV infrastructure development grant focused on home visiting and local level early childhood systems building. Formalized partnerships were established to support and build local community coalitions. The coalitions successfully developed strategies for identifying needs in their local community and plans to implement evidence based home visiting. Montana's evidence-based Maternal, Infant & Early Childhood Home Visiting Program began serving families.
2012	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Between 2005 & 2012, the Department of Public Health and Human Services developed the concept of School Readiness utilizing the School Readiness formula: Ready Services + Ready Families + Ready Communities + Ready Schools = Children Ready for School. A statewide school readiness summit was held and School Readiness teams were formed to solidify the concept that investing in early childhood provides for Best Beginnings for all children.
2013	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Governor Steve Bullock proposes \$2.4 million in state general fund to expand Best Beginnings. The legislature appropriated the full amount requested using federal CHIPRA bonus payments as the source of funding. Legislation providing state funding for Montana Head Start programs was unsuccessful. Similar bills were defeated in 2011 and 2009.

Best Beginnings STARS to Quality Field Test Sites



Montana Rural and High Risk Communities



Legend

-  Rural Community
-  High Risk Community
-  Reservation

Montana Early Childhood Programs and Services Present in Communities

Community	Best Beginning Coalition	Maternal and Early Childhood Home Visiting Site	Early Reading First Site	Striving Readers Site	Graduation Matters School	Healthy Montana Teen Parent Site	Part C In-Home Services <i>^Indicates location of provider agency</i>	Head Start/Early Head Start	Special Education Preschool	At risk community in MIECHV* needs assessment	High needs community for RTT grant~	Rural+
Beaverhead County							X	X	X			X
Big Horn County	X		X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X
Blaine County							X	X	X	X	X	X
Broadwater County					X		X	X	X	X	X	X
Carbon County							X	X	X	X	X	
Carter County							X		X			X
Cascade County	X	X	X	X	X	X	X^	X	X	X	X	
Chouteau County							X		X			X
Custer County	X	X			X		X^	X	X	X	X	X
Daniels County							X		X			X
Dawson County	X						X	X	X	X	X	X
Deer Lodge County				X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X
Fallon County							X		X	X	X	X
Fergus County				X	X		X		X		X	X
Flathead County	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Gallatin County	X			X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Garfield County							X		X			X
Glacier County					X		X	X	X	X	X	X
Golden Valley County							X		X	X	X	X
Granite County							X	X	X	X	X	X
Hill County	X	X			X		X	X	X	X	X	X
Jefferson County							X	X	X	X	X	
Judith Basin County							X		X			X
Lake County	X	X		X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X
Lewis and Clark County	X	X		X	X	X	X^	X	X	X	X	
Liberty County							X	X	X			X
Lincoln County	X			X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X
Madison County							X	X	X			X
Meagher County							X		X	X	X	X
McCone County							X		X			X
Mineral County	X	X					X	X	X	X	X	X
Missoula County	X	X			X	X	X^	X	X	X	X	
Musselshell County				X			X	X	X	X	X	X
Park County	X			X	X		X		X		X	X
Petroleum County							X		X			X
Phillips County							X	X	X			X

Montana Early Childhood Programs and Services Present in Communities

Community	Best Beginning Coalition	Maternal and Early Childhood Home Visiting Site	Early Reading First Site	Striving Readers Site	Graduation Matters School	Healthy Montana Teen Parent Site	Part C In-Home Services <i>^Indicates location of provider agency</i>	Head Start/Early Head Start	Special Education Preschool	At risk community in MIECHV* needs assessment	High needs community for RTT grant~	Rural+
Pondera County							X	X	X	X	X	X
Powder River County							X		X			X
Powell County							X	X	X	X	X	X
Prairie County							X		X			X
Ravalli County	X			X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X
Richland County	X						X		X	X	X	X
Roosevelt County	X						X		X	X	X	X
Rosebud County	X						X	X	X	X	X	X
Sanders County					X		X	X	X	X	X	X
Sheridan County							X		X	X	X	X
Silver Bow County	X			X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Stillwater County							X		X			X
Sweet Grass County							X		X			X
Teton County							X		X			X
Toole County							X	X	X			X
Treasure County							X		X			X
Valley County							X^	X	X	X	X	X
Wheatland County				X			X	X	X		X	X
Wibaux County							X		X			X
Yellowstone County	X	X			X		X^	X	X	X	X	
Blackfeet Nation				X	X	X	**	X	X	X	X	X
Chippewa Cree Tribe					X	X	**	X	X	X	X	X
Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes	X				X	X	**		X	X	X	X
Crow				X	X	X	**	X	X	X	X	X
Fort Belknap						X	**		X	X	X	X
Fort Peck Tribes	X		X	X	X	X	**	X	X	X	X	X
Northern Cheyenne Tribe	X				X	X	**	X	X	X	X	X

Montana Early Childhood Programs and Services Present in Communities

This table provides an overview of services present in all or part of a county or tribal jurisdiction, and whether the community is considered high risk (according to the Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Needs Assessment and Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge criteria) and/or rural.

*MIECHV: federal Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting. The needs assessment considered a variety of factors, including preterm and low birth weight births, crime rates, children under 18 in poverty, and child abuse and domestic violence rates.

~High needs communities for the RTT-ELC grant are communities at risk according to the MIECHV needs assessment, and/or communities that include Striving Readers/Part C/HS, EHS/rural/Indian Reservations

**Part C funds are provided directly from the federal government to tribal entities and may provide different services than the state Part C programs. In-Home services are available from the county located closest to the reservation.

+Rural communities are identified as all those not identified as Metropolitan or Micropolitan Statistical Areas by the U.S. Census Bureau.

Montana's Tiered Quality Rating Improvement System

Standards Alignment

Best Beginnings STARS to Quality Standards (Department of Public Health & Human Services)	Public School Assurance Standards for Public Schools (Office of Public Instruction)
Education, Qualifications, and Training	Teacher Involvement/Teacher and Specialist Licensure
High Quality Supportive Environments (health, safety, curriculum, learning environments, individualized supports for children, use of Early Learning Standards, child guidance, teacher/child interactions, observation and assessment)	School Climate/Opportunity and Educational Equity/Learner Access/Special Education/Health/Assessment
Staff/Caregiver to Child Ratio and Group Size	Class Size and Teacher ratio
Family/Community Partnerships	Board of Trustees (comprehensive family engagement, families participate in the activities of the school and feel welcomed, valued, and connected, two way communication)
Leadership and Program Management	School Leadership and Administration

Montana has adopted a Tiered Quality Rating Improvement System for Early Childhood Programs including child care providers, Head Start, and Early Head Start, entitled Best Beginnings STARS to Quality. The categories of standards within the STARS program align to the Public School Assurance Standards for K-12 public schools, developed by the Office of Public Instruction and approved by the Board of Public Education. As part of Montana's High Quality Plan for the Early Learning Challenge, the Montana Tiered Quality Rating Improvement System Framework is expanded to represent both the Best Beginnings STARS to Quality Program and the potential for future Public Preschool Assurance Standards, based on the K-12 system.

Both the existing K-12 system and the Best Beginnings STARS to Quality system include the TQRIS components of:

- Standards
- Comprehensive Assessment Systems
- Educator Qualifications
- Family Engagement

- Health Promotion
- Effective data practices

Both systems have measurable tiered levels that differentiate quality and reflect high expectations commensurate with nationally recognized standards, though are applicable to the sector they serve and in accord with the operational guidelines. In the Best Beginnings STARS to Quality Program, tiered levels are recognized from 1 STAR to 5 STARS. In the Public School Assurance Standards, four levels are recognized: Regular Accreditation, Regular with Minor Deviation, Advice, and Deficiency. Both systems have supports in place for programs at the lower tier levels to improve proficiency within the standards criterion, including development of quality improvement plans.

As the Office of Public Instruction implements public preschool, OPI will work with the Board of Public Education to research, evaluate, and identify applicable Tiered Assurance Standards for Public Preschool based on developmentally appropriate, nationally recognized standards. The categories of standards will align between the two facets of the Montana TQRIS. For all early childhood settings in Montana, early learning standards are a foundation for recognizing what children need to know, understand, and be able to do throughout a developmental continuum for children age 0-5. These Early Learning Standards are already aligned or in process of alignment with the K-3 Common Content Standards. Early Learning Standards are a cornerstone for any TQRIS.

As OPI and the Board of Public Education consider preschool tiered assurance standards, the process is outlined below:

- Gather a group of identified early childhood educators (preschool and kindergarten) and representatives from higher education to discuss, research, and recommend content and process standards within the identified categories.
- The Office of Public Instruction Accreditation Division will develop formal recommendations based on this work group's input, for consideration by the Superintendent of Public Instruction, Denise Juneau.
- Superintendent Denise Juneau will make recommendations for adoption of preschool tiered assurance and accreditation standards for use in public preschools.

Montana Early Learning Standards

Revision 2013

The standards that guide the work of early childhood professionals to ensure that children from birth to age five have the skills and knowledge they need to achieve success in learning to reach their full potential in life



Table of Contents

Core Domain 1: Emotional and Social

Culture, Family, and Community

- Standard 1.1 *Culture* - Children develop an awareness of and appreciation for similarities and differences between themselves and others
- Standard 1.2 *Family* - Children develop an awareness of the functions and diverse characteristics of families
- Standard 1.3 *Community* - Children develop an understanding of the basic principles of how communities function, including work roles and commerce

Emotional Development

- Standard 1.4 *Self-Concept* - Children develop an awareness and appreciation of self as a unique, competent, and capable individual
- Standard 1.5 *Self-Efficacy* - Children demonstrate a belief in their abilities
- Standard 1.6 *Self-Regulation* - Children manage internal states, feelings, and behavior, and develop the ability to adapt to diverse situations and environments
- Standard 1.7 *Emotional Expression* - Children express a wide and varied range of feelings through facial expressions, gestures, behaviors, and words

Social Development

- Standard 1.8 *Interactions with Adults* - Children show trust, develop an emotional bond, and interact comfortably with adults
- Standard 1.9 *Interactions with Peers* - Children interact and build relationships with peers as they expand their world beyond the family and develop skills in cooperation, negotiation and empathy

Core Domain 2: Physical

Physical Development

- Standard 2.1 *Fine Motor Skills* - Children develop small muscle strength, coordination, and skills
- Standard 2.2 *Gross Motor Skills* - Children develop large muscle strength, coordination and skills

Health, Safety, and Personal Care

- Standard 2.3 *Daily Living Skills* - Children demonstrate personal health and hygiene skills as they develop and practice self-care routines
- Standard 2.4 *Nutrition* - Children eat and enjoy a variety of nutritional foods and develop healthy eating practices
- Standard 2.5 *Physical Fitness* - Children demonstrate healthy behaviors that contribute to life-long well being through physical activity
- Standard 2.6 *Safety Practices* - Children develop an awareness and understanding of safety rules as they learn to make safe and appropriate choices
- Standard 2.6 *Sensorimotor* - Children use their senses to explore the environment and develop skills through sight, smell, touch, taste and sound

Core Domain 3: Communication

Communication and Language Development

- Standard 3.1 *Receptive Communication (Listening and Understanding)* - Children use listening and observation skills to make sense of and respond to spoken language and other forms of communication. Children enter into the exchange of information around what is seen, heard, and experienced. They begin to acquire an understanding of the concepts of language that contribute to learning
- Standard 3.2 *Expressive Communication* - Children develop skills in using sounds, facial expressions, gestures, and words for a variety of purposes, such as to help adults and others understand their needs, ask questions, express feelings and ideas, and solve problems
- Standard 3.3 *Social Communication* - Children develop skills to interact and communicate with others in effective ways
- Standard 3.4 *English Language Learners: Dual Language Learning* - Children develop competency in their home language while becoming proficient in English

Literacy

- Standard 3.4 *Early Reading and Book Appreciation* - Children develop an understanding, skills, and interest in the symbols, sounds, and rhythms of written language as they also develop an interest in reading, gain enjoyment from books, and develop an awareness that the printed word can be used for various purposes
- Standard 3.5 *Print Development/Writing* - Children demonstrate interest and skills in using symbols as a meaningful form of communication
- Standard 3.6 *Print Concepts* - Children develop an understanding that print carries a message through symbols and words and that there is a connection between sounds and letters (the alphabetic principle)
- Standard 3.7 *Phonological Awareness* - Children develop an awareness of the sounds of letters and the combinations of letters that make up words and use this awareness to manipulate syllables and sounds of speech

Core Domain 4: Cognition

Approaches to Learning

- Standard 4.1 *Curiosity* - Children develop imagination, inventiveness, originality, and interest as they explore and experience new things
- Standard 4.2 *Initiative and self-direction* - Children develop an eagerness to engage in new tasks and to take risks in learning new skills or information
- Standard 4.3 *Persistence & attentiveness* - Children develop the ability to focus their attention and concentration to complete tasks and increase their learning
- Standard 4.4 *Reflection and interpretation* - Children develop skills in thinking about their learning in order to inform their future decisions

Reasoning and Representational Thought

- Standard 4.5 *Reasoning and representational thought* - Children develop skills in causation, critical and analytical thinking, problem solving and representational thought

Creative Arts

Standard 4.6 Creative Movement Children produce rhythmic movements spontaneously and in imitation with growing technical and artistic abilities.

Standard 4.7 Drama Children show appreciation and awareness of drama through observation and imitation, and by participating in simple dramatic plots, assuming roles related to their life experiences and their fantasies.

Standard 4.8 Music Children engage in a variety of musical or rhythmic activities with growing skills for a variety of purposes, including enjoyment, self-expression, and creativity.

Standard 4.9 Visual or Fine Arts Children demonstrate a growing understanding and appreciation for the creative process as they use the visual arts to express personal interests, ideas, and feelings, and share opinions about artwork and artistic experiences.

Mathematics and Numeracy

Standard 4.10 Number Sense & Operations - Children develop the ability to think and work with numbers, to understand their uses, and describe their relationships through structured and everyday experiences.

Standard 4.11 Measurement - Children develop skills in using measurement instruments to explore and discover measurement relationships and characteristics, such as length, quantity, volume, distance, weight, area, and time.

Standard 4.12 Data Analysis - Children apply mathematical skills of data analysis, such as counting, sorting, and comparing objects.

Standard 4.13 Algebraic Thinking - Children learn to identify, describe, produce, and create patterns using mathematical language/materials.

Standard 4.14 Geometry and Spatial Reasoning - Children build the foundation for recognizing and describing shapes by manipulating, playing with, naming, and making common shapes. Children learn spatial reasoning and directional words as they become aware of their bodies and personal space in their physical environment.

Science

Standard 4.15 Scientific Thinking and Use of the Scientific Method - As children seek to understand their environment and test new knowledge, they engage in scientific investigations using their senses to observe, manipulate objects, ask questions, make predictions, and develop conclusions and generalizations.

Standard 4.16 Life Science - Children develop an understanding and comparisons for living things.

Standard 4.17 Physical Science - Children develop an understanding of the physical world (the nature and properties of energy and nonliving matter, and the forces that give order to the natural world).

Standard 4.18 Earth and Space - Children develop an understanding of the earth and planets.

Standard 4.19 Engineering - Children develop an understanding of the processes that assist people in designing and building.

Social Studies

Standard 4.20 Awareness of Time (History) - Children develop an understanding of the concept of time, including past, present and future as they are able to recognize recurring experiences that are part of the daily routine.

Standard 4.21 Places, Regions and Spatial Awareness - (geography) Children develop an understanding that each place has its own unique characteristics. Children develop an understanding of how they are affected by, and the effect that they can have upon the world around them.

Standard 4.22 The Physical World (Ecology) - Children become aware of their environment and our interdependence on the natural world, and develop an awareness of how to care for the environment and why it is important.

Standard 4.23 Technology - Children become aware of technological tools and explore/learn the ways in which to use these resources in a developmentally appropriate manner.

Montana's Early Learning Standards**What they are:**

Montana's Early Learning Standards is a source document that guides the work of early childhood professionals to ensure that children from birth to age five have the skills and knowledge they need to achieve success in learning to reach their full potential in life.

Who they are for:

The Montana Early Learning Standards are a tool for every early childhood and related service professional, such as early care and education practitioners, elementary school teachers, early interventionists, pre-service teachers, home visitors, health practitioners, or anyone else working with young children and their families. The Montana Early Learning Standards are also a tool for college instructors, high school teachers, Childcare Resource and Referral professional development specialists, Head Start and Early Head Start Training and Technical assistance personnel, and others who plan and provide early childhood professional and career development.

It is recognized that Montana's children are cared for, nurtured, and educated in a variety of settings. These include their own homes; family, friend and neighbor homes; family and group childcare homes; childcare centers; preschool programs; Head Start; Early Head Start; public schools; and other early childhood settings. Throughout the Standards, the people that care for Montana's young children will be referred to primarily as "teacher" as defined as anyone who cares for provide support and services to young children and families. It is recognized that those who provide direct services to children are often referred to as "caregivers" but one cannot care for children well without teaching, and teaching is most effective when it occurs in a caring and nurturing context (The ELS Task Force, August 2013).

Their purpose and use:

- **The Early Learning Standards are not a diagnostic tool, an assessment tool, or a mandatory set of regulations**
- The Early Learning Standards provide a structure that frames the amazing developmental process from birth to age five as the foundation for success in life and learning.
- The Standards are meant to build upon one's understanding of the continuum of children's growth and development.
- The Standards describe the expectations about what young children should know and be able to do across different domains of learning.
- They are a tool to support understanding of young children and a resource for ideas about ways to enhance their early learning experiences.
- The Early Learning Guidelines support the transfer of child development knowledge to improve teaching and caregiving practices and encourage individualization.
- The Guidelines provide a common language and are a tool to enhance communication among the professionals who impact and provide services to young

children and their families.

- The Guidelines are not an exhaustive list of skills developed in the first years of life.

Their structure and revisions:

In 2013, the Montana Early Learning Standards were substantially revised.

- The 2004 Early Learning Guidelines for Children from 3 -5 years of age were merged with the 2009 Infant Toddler Early Learning Guidelines and were renamed as the Montana Early Learning Standards to better reflect their current usage and alignment with K-12 Standards.
- Changes were also made in the document to update the Standards with current research, particularly in the areas of brain development, and cultural and linguistic diversity, including significant and meaningful inclusions of the Montana Indian Education for All Act.
- In addition a crosswalk analysis of the Guidelines was conducted to highlight connections to standards, such as the Montana Common Core Kindergarten Standards for Language Arts and Math or the Next Generation Science Standards.
- The structure of the Standards was modified to provide a *continuum* of benchmarks and indicators *without listing specific ages*. The Early Learning Standards highlight developmental progressions that are not linked to specific ages. Therefore each child's development can be identified and observed over time on the continuum.
- The Montana Early Learning Standards were organized around 4 Core Domains, which can be defined as broad categories or dimensions reflective of children's learning and development. They are **Emotional and Social; Physical; Communication; and Cognition**.
- Although the information presented is organized by developmental domains, it is important to note that each domain is related to and influences the other domains in children's growth and development. Growth and development occurs not as a series of isolated events throughout the first years of life, but flows in a unique way for each child. Sometimes growth in one domain will necessitate a pause, or even regression, in another area.
- The Standards were reviewed, modified, and validated by a task force of early childhood leaders and experts from across the state, representing various areas of expertise and service. In addition, multiple stakeholders representing specific interests, such as Indian Education for All, were asked to review the Guidelines and provide feedback. Other stakeholders included direct early childhood providers, directors, higher education, special education, Head Start, and Early Head Start. Comments were received on the usability, readability, completeness, and attention to specific details.

Montana's Early Learning Guidelines SHOULD be used:

- To help teachers recognize the critical need to meet children's social/emotional needs, and the fact that meeting those needs serves as the basis for future learning
- To help teachers meet children's developmental needs, including those of children with disabilities, at the level they require and in an individual capacity
- To improve quality in early care and education programs and serve as a model for teaching and building secure relationships with young children

- To support adults in learning more about child development
- To emphasize the importance of early care and education to the community
- To help teachers recognize their own value and abilities
- To acknowledge the diverse value systems in which children learn and grow
- To help teachers focus on what children CAN do and reinforce the idea that children are capable learners
- To increase the flow of information among early childhood teachers, professionals, and policy makers
- To develop training and education programs for adults working with children and their families
- To assist early childhood professionals communicate with policy makers, community members, and key stakeholders.

Montana's Early Learning Guidelines SHOULD NOT be used:

- As a diagnostic tool to assess a child's development
- To "push down" curriculum meant for older children to young children
- As a screening tool to determine school readiness and limit access to kindergarten
- To increase pressure on children and the adults who care for and educate them
- To justify inappropriate assessment packages
- To place increased importance on academics and move adults away from the power of play and relationships
- To suggest that preschool is more valuable than the home experience
- To evaluate early care and education programs or parenting skills
- To mandate specific curriculum or practices or serve as rules and regulations for programs to follow
- To highlight differences between the core philosophies of early childhood and elementary education
- To make decisions about funding programs.

Guiding Principles

The following principles reflect the essential understandings for the development and implementation of the Guidelines.

- A. **Research and Best Practice:** Early childhood practice should reflect current research and be grounded in evidence-based practices. The Guidelines reflect the most recent available research about child development. Where research is not available, information in the Guidelines is supported by evidence-based practice and professional wisdom.
 - B. **Basic Needs:** All children have the right to have their basic needs met. Children rely on parents and early care and education practitioners to know what to do if their needs are not being met, or are being compromised. Research shows that general health is a critical indicator of a child's success in school (National Center for Education Statistics, 2002 and Pathways Mapping Initiative, 2002).
 - C. **Brain Development:** All children have the right to have their early experiences acknowledged and recognized as extremely important in their further development. Children come into the world ready to learn, actively engaging in making sense of their world from birth. The first three years of a child's life set the groundwork for a lifetime of brain development and must be taken into consideration when planning any further learning (Families and Work Institute, 1997).
 - D. **Fluidity of Development:** Child development occurs across domains and age ranges. The dynamic interaction of all areas and stages of development was considered in each Domain and Benchmark. Learning is multidimensional and children learn best through integrated, meaningful experiences.
 - E. **Child Development Expertise:** All children have the right to expect that their early care and education practitioner has a solid knowledge of child development, and continues to improve his or her practice through continuing education on the latest developments in the field. All teachers of young children need foundational knowledge in child development, along with professional development in teaching practices that promote optimal outcomes for each child. Research shows that quality early care and education contributes to a child's readiness to learn, and that staff education and experience are determining factors in high quality programs (Pathways Mapping Initiative, 2002).
 - F. **Culture: Respect and appreciation for children's heritage and the diverse cultures they operate within are a valuable and important part of their development.** The Guidelines reinforce healthy partnerships between families and other caregivers to ensure optimal support for young children. All children have the right to expect that their home, community, and family lives will be respected in the early care and education setting. Children's home language with their families must be respected as the basis for learning a second language. It is recognized by the National Education Goals Panel, based on research that a child's learning is complex and is influenced by cultural and contextual factors (National Association for the Education of Young Children, 1995).
 - G. **Developmentally Appropriate Practice:** All children have the right to be cared for and educated in a developmentally appropriate manner. All children have the right to be treated as an individual with unique strengths, interests, and approaches to learning. Early care and education must address the "whole child" and be constantly working with each child on multiple levels. Childhood is a unique stage in human development, and must be appreciated as such (National Association for the Education of Young Children, 1997).
 - H. **Individually Appropriate Practice:** The pace and sequence of development and learning varies from child to child. The Guidelines acknowledge that children begin life as capable and confident learners with unique strengths, interests, and approaches to learning. Caregivers have the responsibility to adjust their practice to support the growth and development of each child.
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- I. **Ethics:** All children have the right to be cared for and educated under the protection of a Code of Ethical Conduct. Early care and education practitioners should understand and follow the profession's ethical guidelines at all times, in all situations (National Association for the Education of Young Children, 1998).
 - J. **Family Involvement:** All children have the right to the involvement of their families in all aspects of their care and education. Families are key partners in every young child's education, and must be supported by the early care and education community. Effective communication and involvement consistently lead to positive effects for the early development of young children (National Association for the Education of Young Children and National Association of Early Childhood Specialists in State Departments of Education, 2002). Families need access to information on what to look for in choosing quality early care and education.
 - K. **Developmental diversity:** Children are capable of learning, achieving, and making developmental progress regardless of their physical, emotional, or cognitive abilities, backgrounds, or experiences. All children have the right to the supports, resources, and services they need to participate actively and meaningfully in the early childhood setting. Early care and education must be prepared to work together with families, following parents' lead, to make referrals when children's development appears delayed, collaborate with children's IFSP/IEP teams, modify/adapt program activities and routines (make reasonable accommodations), and implement appropriate interventions within the context of the early childhood setting (DEC/NAEYC Joint Position Statement on Inclusion, 1993).
 - L. **Life-long Learners:** All children have the right to be supported as life-long learners. Children should be recognized as capable individuals and competent learners. They must be allowed to develop a disposition and eagerness to learn in order to find success in their learning experiences. A positive approach to learning has been shown to be a critical determinant to mastering school skills (National Center for Education Statistics, 2002).
 - M. **Play:** All children have the right to expect that their play is respected as a valuable learning tool. They are to have a rich learning environment in which to explore their world, and are to be exposed to a variety of experiences to help deepen their understanding. Children learn best through a combination of teacher-directed and child-initiated methods, through both guided play and open-ended activities. Play is how a child accesses the complexities of the world, and is the primary way they learn about the world around them (National Association for the Education of Young Children, 1987).
 - N. **Policy-Making:** All children have the right to be supported and protected by policy makers at the community, state, and national levels. Decision makers must always keep in mind the effects that their actions have on our youngest citizens (Children's Defense Fund, 2002).
 - O. **School Readiness:** All children have the right to expect that the public school system, specifically kindergarten classrooms, will be prepared to meet their needs. School readiness is a shared responsibility among the school, community, family, and child.
 - P. **Relationships:** Positive social relationships are the foundations for healthy growth and development. The Guidelines reflect the belief that infants and toddlers who develop strong attachments with primary caregivers are better able to learn, play and grow.
 - Q. **Environment:** The environment is a crucial element in the learning and development of young children. The Guidelines promote engagement of infants' and toddlers' curiosity, supporting them in all aspects of development, and allowing them to construct their own understanding about the world around them through exploration and discovery.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Montana's Early Learning Standards is a source document that reflects the passionate, engaged, and effective collaboration of early childhood experts and leaders from across the state representing a variety of interests, knowledge, and experience in the care and education of young children. The following representatives provided key expertise as members of the Early Learning Standards Task Force. Their contributions are incredibly valued and appreciated. In addition to these state early childhood leaders, other key stakeholders and content specialists provided feedback and The facilitation of this effort was conducted jointly by Cindy O'Dell and Libby Hancock. The Early Childhood Services Bureau of the Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services provided funding.

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BIOGRAPHIES OF KEY PERSONNEL (DPHHS/MSL/OPI/OCHE GRANT APPLICATION)

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES (DPHHS)

Sarah Corbally

Sarah Corbally is currently the Administrator of the Child and Family Services Division (CFSD) at the Montana DPHHS. In this position, she is responsible for overseeing the State's child welfare system, including but not limited to: taking reports of suspected child maltreatment, conducting investigations and assessments of reports, in-home services in appropriate cases, foster care, guardianship, and adoption. Corbally previously worked as the CFSD Program Bureau Chief where she ensured compliance with all state and federal laws, rules, and regulations. Prior to working for DPHHS, she represented DPHHS in District Court child abuse and neglect proceedings as an Assistant Attorney General with the State's Child Protection Unit and as a Cascade County Deputy County Attorney. She was a law clerk at the University of Colorado, School of Medicine, Department of Pediatrics, Kempe Children's Center during law school. In 2003, she received her JD from the College of Law at the University of Denver in Colorado. Prior to attending law school, she received in 1996 a BSW degree from the University of Montana in Missoula, Montana and worked for years in direct services with children in the child welfare and juvenile justice systems.

Dianna Frick

Dianna Frick has over 15 years of experience in public health. Her experience includes international health projects in Washington D.C. for two years as a program assistant with the Family Planning Services Division of the United States Agency for International Development. She earned a BA degree in International Affairs in 1996 from the Lewis and Clark College and a Master's degree in Maternal and Child Health and Epidemiology from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in 2003. During her degree program she worked at IntraH/IntraHealth, an international health organization, to develop and conduct research studies on birth spacing preferences and family planning use in multiple counties. Following her degree, Frick was selected as a Public Health Prevention Service fellow with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, where she planned and conducted a survey of STD clinics throughout the U.S., developed an evaluation plan with the Indian Health Services STD program, and participated in a Epi-Aid with a Los Angeles health clinic. During a two-year field assignment in Montana, she coordinated the Maternal and Child Health (MCH) Needs Assessment and subsequent strategic planning. Frick currently works as the Maternal and Early Childhood Home Visiting Section Supervisor at the Montana DPHHS, which includes the federal home visiting and state home visiting funding for high quality, evidence-based home visiting models.

Christy Hill-Larson

Christy Hill-Larson has worked in the field of early childhood education in a variety of capacities for thirty-four years. Her experience includes working as a lead teacher in a private non-profit child care center, a Head Start teacher, a Head Start home visitor, the director of a child care center, an early childhood consultant and trainer, an early childhood advocate, and the Executive Director of the Montana Head Start Association. Currently, she is a special projects

coordinator for the Early Childhood Project at Montana State University. She earned a BS degree in Home Economics with an emphasis on Family and Consumer Science from Washington State University in Pullman, Washington, in 1977.

Caitlin Jensen

Caitlin Jensen is the Montana Head Start State Collaboration Office Director, and works closely with the Early Childhood Comprehensive Services program, as well as the Best Beginnings State Advisory Council. Caitlin joined the Early Childhood Services Bureau of DPHHS in 2012, and is the state's contact between the 29 Montana Head Start programs, state agencies, and the Office of Head Start. Caitlin's position involves coordinating and collaborating with key stakeholders, relationship building, and grant management. Prior to this role, Caitlin was a Health Education Specialist for Montana Maternal and Child Health. The position allowed her to work in partnership with 56 county and 7 Tribal Health Departments. She is the DPHHS representative on the Interagency Committee for Change by Women, where she co-chairs the Employment Equity Committee. Caitlin graduated from the University of Washington with a B.A. in English Literature in 2007, and a Masters in Social Work (MSW), with a concentration in Policy and Advocacy in 2010. Prior to graduate school, Caitlin lived in South Africa and volunteered in an afterschool program, as well as a public health clinic. While receiving her educational degrees, Caitlin participated in internships which provided her experience in interdisciplinary Maternal and Child Health policy training, including the planning and implementation of the "*First Annual Native Tobacco Policy Summit*", as well as advocacy for children with special health care needs at Seattle Children's Hospital. While interning with the Washington Health Foundation, she worked with the Attorney General to reduce prescription drug abuse among college-aged students. She is passionate about supporting children and families through policy and social justice work at the state and local levels.

Jamie Palagi

Jamie Palagi has worked with children for over 19 years in a variety of capacities with progressive responsibility over the years. She has worked for the State of Montana DPHHS for just under 8 years, starting as the Early Childhood Services Bureau Chief for 6 years, and now as the Human and Community Services Division Administrator for just under 2 years, where she manages over 500 employees, 40 field offices, and \$400 million annually. The Division includes not only the Early Childhood Services Bureau but also TANF, SNAP, MA, CHIP, LIEAP, CSBG and other programs for low income families. Palagi has also served as an adjunct instructor for the University of Montana-Western, teaching core early childhood courses for students working toward their AA degree. Her experience includes senior administration and program management at the state government and local non-profit level. Her demonstrated competencies are in the areas of organizational development, strategic planning, comprehensive systems, child development, staff development, family support, and program administration. In May 1996, she received a Bachelor's degree in Family Science and Child Development from the Montana State University in Bozeman, Montana, and a Master's degree in Human Services Leadership from Concordia University in Minnesota in June 2005.

Wendy Studz

Wendy Studz taught kindergarten, first, and second grades in Bozeman and Helena, Montana, for eight years. For the next thirteen years, she was employed by Rocky Mountain Development

Council Head Start working in the capacities of Literacy and Education Specialist, Supervisor, Mentor/Coach, and grant-writer. She provided coaching and supervision for twelve education staff members in three counties, worked extensively promoting Family Engagement and Literacy practices with staff and family members, and writing grants to improve literacy practices at Head Start. She is currently employed as the Part C Coordinator overseeing systems and services in the Developmental Disabilities Program of the Montana DPHHS. In 1991, she received a BS degree in Elementary Education with a concentration in early childhood education from the University of Great Falls in Montana.

MONTANA STATE LIBRARY (MSL)

Sara Groves

Sara Groves is the marketing and communications coordinator and Ready 2 Read project director at the Montana State Library. Groves also works as a freelance writer specializing in families and parenting and her work has been recognized with awards from the Associated Press, the Los Angeles Times, and the Montana Newspaper Association. She has over 15 years of experience in project management, fundraising, marketing, communications, and teaching at several organizations including the American Library Association, the Louisiana Endowment for the Humanities, the Louisiana Health Sciences Center and Tulane University. She holds a MFA degree in creative writing from the University of New Orleans and a Bachelor of Arts degree in English and in Communications from Alma College in Michigan. Sara was also a Rayburn Miller Fellowship recipient and studied creative writing with internationally-recognized writers at Charles University in Prague, CZ.

Jennie Stapp

Jennie Stapp is a native of Montana raised in Columbia Falls where her parents were both educators. Stapp first worked in a library while a student at Rocky Mountain College in Billings. Following graduation Jennie served as Peace Corps volunteers in Bolivia. It was during this experience that she decided to pursue a career in librarianship. She earned a MA degree in Library Science from the University of Arizona and then returned to Montana where she worked at the Montana Historical Society Research Center for three years. Stapp has been employed by the Montana State Library since 2005 and has served as the State Librarian since January of 2012.

OFFICE OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION (OPI)

Terri Barclay

Terri Barclay is currently an Instructional Specialist for Early Grades for the Montana OPI Instructional Innovations Unit. She works with educators across the state in early childhood standards and implementation of the Early Reading First and Montana Striving Readers grant. She holds an M. Ed in Education and an endorsement in K-12 Special Education. She has an extensive background of working with students with diverse learning abilities for 16 years in the Montana public school setting.

Susan Bailey Anderson

Susan Bailey-Anderson, Professional Development Unit Manager in the Special Education Division, oversees many programs and projects for the Office of Public Instruction. These projects include, the State Personnel Development Grant (SPDG), Professional Development and Technical Assistance (CSPD), Montana Behavioral Initiative (MBI), Services/Issues for Students with Emotional Disturbance/Behavior Disorders, Integrated School Mental Health, Paraprofessional Training, Targeted School Improvement Activities, Speech Stipend Program, Transition, Special Education Endorsement Project, Integrated School Mental Health, School Teacher Mentor Programs and Training, Secondary Transition and Best Practices in Professional Development.

Justine Jam

Justine Jam attended the University of Montana in Missoula, Montana, and graduated with a BS degree from Montana State University-N in Havre, Montana, and received a MA degree in 2006 from New Mexico Highlands University in Curriculum Instruction. For three years she taught as a K-3 Reading Instructor and 3rd grade classroom instructor at Rocky Boy Elementary School located on the Chippewa Cree Indian Reservation in Montana. She was also a classroom instructor for grades K, K/1, 3rd and a K-6 Art instructor for Navajo, Hispanic, Zuni, Hopi, and Anglo students in Gallup and Las Vegas, NM. Jam currently provides teachers and administrators support to integrate Indian Education for all as an OPI Indian Education for All Implementation Specialist - from early childhood through the K-12 pathway.

Tara Ferriter-Smith

Tara Ferriter-Smith is an Instructional Specialist for the Montana OPI. She provides support for districts and educators across the state implementing effective research-based instructional strategies for increasing student achievement. She earned her MS degree in Educational Leadership at Western Governor's University in Salt Lake City, Utah, and a BA degree in Elementary Education at Carroll College in Helena, Montana. She has been working with the OPI for eight years and before that was a classroom teacher for ten years.

Danni McCarthy

Danni McCarthy taught special education for seven years in Montana and Idaho. She earned her MEd and EdS from Northwest Nazarene University (NNU) in Nampa, Idaho. She has been the Special Education 619 coordinator for the OPI since December of 2009. Throughout the four years with the OPI, she has collaborated on developing a guidance document for transition from IDEA Part C, to IDEA Part B, and has conducted trainings throughout Montana on how to use the document. In the spring of 2014, she will be working with Head Starts throughout Montana to develop a guidance document for Head Start and the school districts.

OFFICE OF THE COMMISSIONER OF HIGHER EDUCATION (OCHE)

John E. Cech

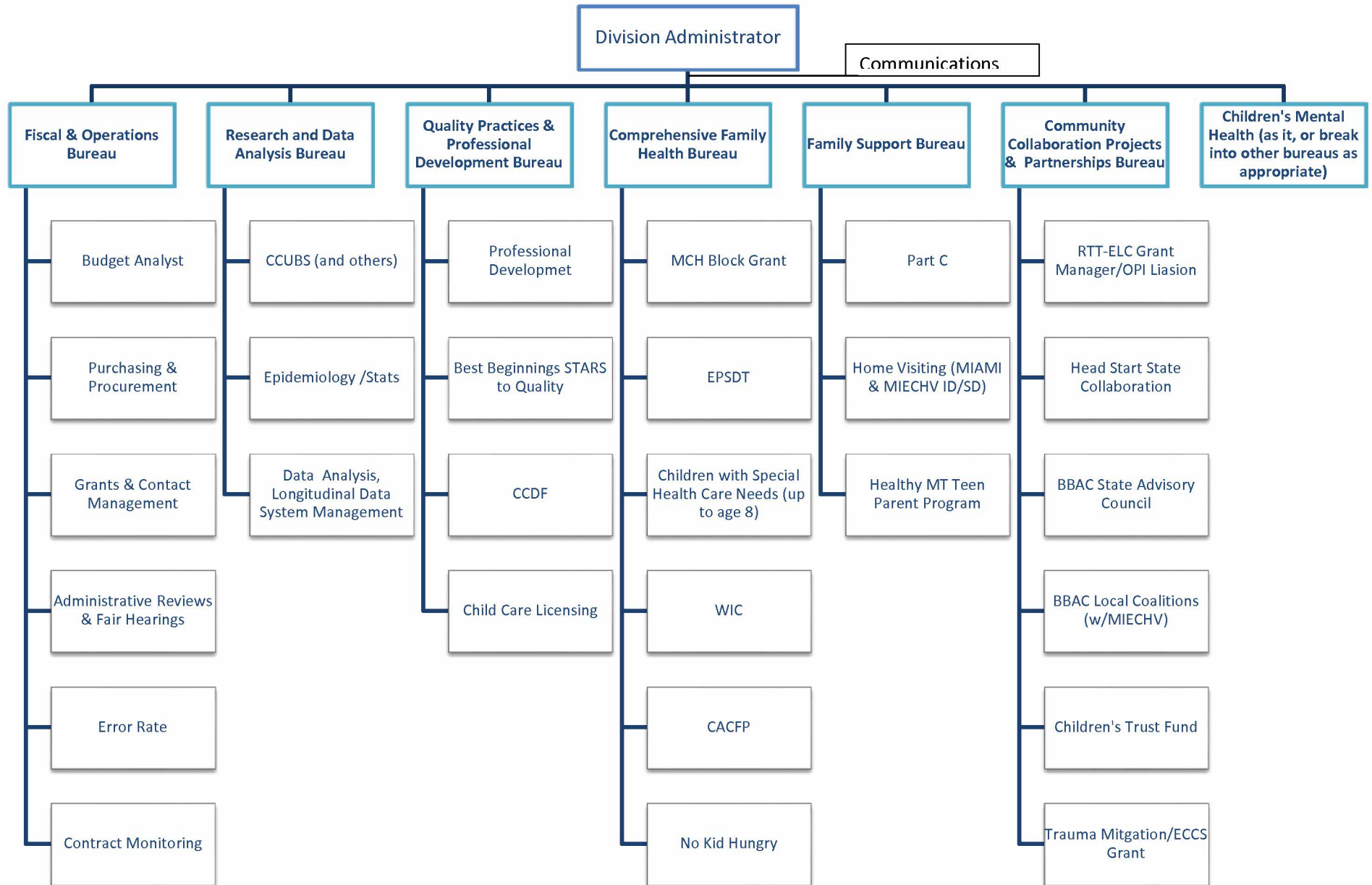
Dr. John E. Cech has been a transformational leader in Montana higher education for over 20 years. Dr. Cech currently serves as the Deputy Commissioner for Two-Year and Community College Education for the Montana University System (MUS) and is the key staff member for the Board of Regents on matters of state workforce development in the two-year sector. As Deputy Commissioner, he supervises federally funded College Access grants for the Montana University System including Carl Perkins, GEAR UP, and TRIO Educational Talent Search. He

is also the system leader in the high-profile MUS initiative known as College!Now. Dr. Cech serves as a member of the State Workforce Investment Board, Co-Chair of the State of Montana Workforce Development Taskforce, and Chair-elect of the National Association of Community College State System Directors. Between 2002 and 2010, he worked as the Chief Campus Officer of City College at Montana State University (MSU). Prior to joining MSU Billings, he was the Dean of Continuing Education, Community Services, and Summer Sessions for Rocky Mountain College in Billings, Montana, for thirteen years and a faculty member in computer information systems for five years.

Anneliese Ripley

Anneliese Ripley is currently the interim assistant provost at the University of Montana (Montana Western). For the past 15 years she has been Dean of the School of Outreach and Research at Montana Western. In her capacity as dean, Ripley administratively facilitated the distance delivery of Montana Western's Early Childhood program. The program is delivered in a seven city, site-based, cohort model as well as on-line and allows students from across the state to pursue certificate, associate and baccalaureate degrees in early childhood education. She has 30 years of program management and administrative experience, has a record of obtaining extramural funds (~\$6M), and extensive experience managing budgets; supervising employees and contractors; serving internal and external clients; analyzing data; forecasting trends; developing strategic plans; developing, implementing and assessing academic programs; and supporting institutional goals.

Division of Early Childhood





Governance Structure of Best Beginnings Council



The Council includes all of the agency and program partners. The Council members are often program managers from each organization or agency, but may include directors of organizations or other staff, particularly when organizations are small.

The steering committee of coalition members is a smaller, adept subset of the Council membership that keeps the Council's work moving forward, coordinates and plans meeting content, reports, etc.

The executive committee is made up of the leaders of each organization or agency on the Council (Directors, CEOs, Executive Directors, etc.) and meets 2-3 times a year. The agendas of the Executive Committee meetings are set by the Best Beginnings Council and include the issues that can only be resolved at the highest levels of leadership.

The coordinator serves the Council and works with all components of the governance structure.



Department of Public Health and Human Services

Human and Community Services Division ♦ PO Box 202925 ♦ Helena, MT 59620-2925

Phone: (406) 444-1788

Steve Bullock, Governor

Richard H. Opper, Director

October 7, 2013

Deborah S. Delisle
Assistant Secretary of Elementary
and Secondary Education
U.S. Department of Education

and

George H. Sheldon
Acting Assistant Secretary for
Children and Families
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

Dear Ms. Delisle and Mr. Sheldon,

The purpose of this letter is to demonstrate the commitment and support for Montana's application to the Race to the Top, Early Learning Challenge Grant (CFDA #84.412A) from the Best Beginnings Advisory Council.

The Best Beginnings Advisory Council (BBAC) is Montana's State Advisory Council for Early Childhood. The strategic goal of the BBAC is to ensure Montana has a comprehensive, coordinated, early childhood system that provides a governance structure and leads to strong collaboration in order to best meet the needs of Montana's youngest citizens. The BBAC governance structure is founded on collaboration and coordination within state governments, as well as with 23 local early childhood coalitions. The BBAC members work through the Family Support, Professional Development, Social and Emotional Health, High Quality Early Childhood Education, Strategic Communication, Outreach and Public Awareness, and Health committees to drive systems change. Local community coalition coordinators are present at meetings and insightfully engage the BBAC to think and act locally, which is critical for engaging children and families in rural and Tribal communities.

The BBAC recognizes the unprecedented opportunity of the Race to the Top, Early Learning Challenge grant, and is committed to working with the Governor of Montana to assure all children, especially those with high needs, are not only raised in a supportive, thriving state, but one full of opportunities for the future. The BBAC knows Montana is ready for this challenge. We have laid the foundation and are we are prepared to optimize opportunities in early childhood.

The BBAC enthusiastically and respectfully requests your consideration of Montana's grant application.

Sincerely,

The Committee Chairs of the Best Beginnings Advisory Council

(b)(6)



Best Beginnings Council of Yellowstone County

October 11, 2013

Leadership Team

Billings Clinic

Jeanne Manske

Billings Family YMCA

Tina Postel

Family Support Network

Wendy Ochs

Head Start, Inc

Kathy Kelker

HRDC Community Action Agency

Barb Perzinski

Independent Practice Psychologist

Karen Kietzman

Parent and Child Reading Assistance

Michelle Breum

RiverStone Health

Shawn Hinz

STEP, Inc.

*Ann Treece,
Amy Olsen*

The Center for Children and Families

*Donna Huston,
Becky Bey*

The Family Tree Center

Stacy Dressen

United Way of Yellowstone County

Carol Burton

Young Families Early Head Start

Debbie Richert

To Whom It Concerns,

The Leadership Team of the Best Beginnings Council of Yellowstone County wholeheartedly supports the state of Montana application for the Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge Grant. The Council is composed of representatives from a variety of sectors, including child care, mental health, family support, child abuse prevention, government, schools, services for special needs, Head Start and Early Head Start, and the business community. The Council is working diligently to improve the system of care for children ages 0-8 in Yellowstone County.

The goals of the grant align completely with the needs of our community and we commend the state of Montana on the depth of their effort to engage local communities in assessment and planning with regard to early childhood needs.

Our council urges the proposal review committee to consider the fact that Montana is positioned to be highly successful with the implementation of this grant because of their recent work on collaboration and communication about early childhood needs at the state level, which has created similar capacity at the local level. Mechanisms have been created at the state for different bureaus to share funding, information, and to jointly convene local community stakeholders. At the local community level, this has resulted in the creation of similar collaborative infrastructure in the form of our Best Beginnings Councils. It is much more possible for local service providers to collaborate, create efficiencies, and engage in a community approach to improving the system of care for early childhood when it is supported by similar values and infrastructure at the state level. We cannot say enough about the new energy and enthusiasm in our community as a result of the collaborative approaches and requirements of recent state funding for early childhood work.

We are sure that every state has compelling early childhood needs. We would like the review committee to know that certain intangible assets are in place in Montana that will be the tipping point to propel Montana to great success with the Early Learning Challenge grant. These are:

- HOPE that system improvement is possible.
- BELIEF on the local level that the state of Montana wants to be a serious partner with local *coalitions* of service providers and to support individual service providers in the context of collaborative community plans. This change has forced local service providers to take collaboration seriously and to genuinely engage in system think at the local level.
- VALUES which have been codified at the local council level all across the state which embrace data-driven decision making, evidence-based practice, revenue-neutral solutions, and collaboration across sectors.
- WILLINGNESS on the part of individual service providers, community leaders, and local funders like United Ways, to implement system changes in our own spheres of influence to improve the outcome of children. For example, United Way of Yellowstone County is using the Council's *Community Roadmap for Improving the System of Care for Early Childhood* to align their funding opportunities.

Our council welcomes the opportunity to partner with the state of Montana on implementation of the Race to The Top Early Learning Challenge grant. We will gladly participate in meetings, assessment, information sharing, planning, implementation, and sustainability efforts.

Sincerely, Council Coordinator

(b)

(b)(6)

On behalf of the Best Beginnings of Yellowstone County Leadership Team

State of Montana

Board of Public Education

PO Box 200601
Helena, Montana 59620-0601
(406) 444-6576
www.bpe.mt.gov

Deborah S. Delisle
Assistant Secretary of Elementary and Secondary Education
U.S. Department of Education

and

George H. Sheldon
Acting Assistant Secretary for Children and Families
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

RE: Montana Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge CFDA # 84.412A

Dear Assistant Secretary Delisle and Acting Assistant Secretary Sheldon,

I was an elementary education teacher for 39 years. As such, I witnessed the different readiness levels displayed by students as they entered school. There is much research that proves and validates the value of high-quality programs and services that are offered to children before entering kindergarten. I didn't need the research. I saw it demonstrated daily in the classrooms. When comparing those students who came with high needs to those students who came with the necessary readiness skills and support, it was apparent that we needed to address those gaps. My school district is committed to addressing these concerns. We were one of the first in the state to offer full day kindergarten. We now have an Early Learning Family Center that serves 4 year olds from identified areas of high need. The results of these programs validate the worth of the program. It is good work but it is not enough. The state needs to offer these services to all who qualify.

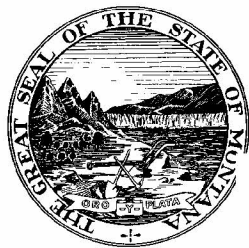
I currently serve on the Montana Board of Public Education. We are the group that accredits schools and licenses educators. Please know that I, in my position of leadership on the Board, will help to facilitate the development of high quality professional training for current teachers. I will also work with the Certification Standards and Practices Advisory Council (CSPAC) as it explores the possibility of recommending endorsement for those wishing to pursue this. We need to be assured that the programs being offered to the educators will help to deliver materials that will ensure success for the educator. We need to be assured that these programs are delivering services that will ensure success for the student while in school and even beyond. To that end, the Montana Board of Public Education must be involved.

I believe that a RTT-ELC grant would aid us in our endeavors. Thank you for your consideration of our proposal.

Sincerely,

(b)(6)

Chairperson, Montana Board of Public Education



Montana University System

BOARD OF REGENTS OF HIGHER EDUCATION

2500 Broadway ♦ PO Box 203101 ♦ (406) 444-6570 ♦ FAX (406) 444-1469 ♦ www.mus.edu

October 9, 2013

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Assistant Secretary of Elementary

and

George H. Sheldon
Acting Assistant Secretary for

and Secondary Education
U.S. Department of Education
Human Services

Children and Families
U.S. Department of Health and

Dear Ms. Delisle and Mr. Sheldon,

On behalf of the Montana University System and its Board of Regents of Higher Education, I express our enthusiastic support for the State of Montana's application for the Race to the Top Montana Early Learning Challenge Grant (CFDA #84.412A).

Montana colleges and universities strive every day to remove barriers that stand in the way of our citizens' access to a high-quality education. As chairman of the governing board of the Montana University System, and as a career K-12 educator, I see the objectives and the potential of the Montana Early Learning Challenge as great door openers to educational opportunity, student success, healthy communities, and a strong democracy.

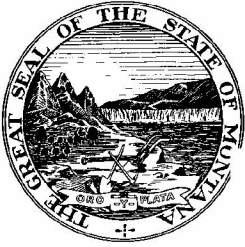
The Montana University System continually seeks new ways to provide college access to potential first-generation college students and under-served or under-represented populations. In my professional experience, the students who are often at risk of having little opportunity for a college education are the students who were not ready or prepared for elementary school. There is a direct correlation between preparedness and success that begins at the early end of the educational spectrum. I am proud of the early childhood development programs and training that we offer to future educators in our colleges and departments of education in Montana. The Montana University System stands ready to serve our part in the important work that will be accomplished under this grant.

Kindergarten readiness correlates ultimately to college readiness. Student success in college correlates to a better trained workforce, better economic opportunities, better opportunities for thriving families, communities, and our nation. I ask for your support in this unprecedented chance for Montana to prove how a wise investment in young people during their most formative stage of life will pay

MONTANA STATE UNIVERSITY — Campuses at Billings, Bozeman, Great Falls, and Havre

THE UNIVERSITY OF MONTANA — Campuses at Butte, Dillon, Helena, and Missoula

Dawson Community College (Glendive) — Flathead Valley Community College (Kalispell) — Miles Community College (Miles City)



Montana University System

BOARD OF REGENTS OF HIGHER EDUCATION

2500 Broadway ♦ PO Box 203101 ♦ (406) 444-6570 ♦ FAX (406) 444-1469 ♦ www.mus.edu

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Governor

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Superintendent
of Public Instruction

dividends to our society and the world. That sounds like a lofty statement, but it is not an overstatement. We view this as a big deal. We appreciate your support.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

(b)(6)

Chairman, Montana Board of Regents of Higher Education
and Teacher / Curriculum Director in the Anaconda (Montana) Public Schools



Central Montana Head Start
25 Meadowlark Lane
Lewistown, MT 59457
406-538-7751 or 1-800-766-3028
Fax 406-538-7752
E-mail: cmhs@cmheadstart.org



October 9, 2013

Deborah S. Delisle
Assistant Secretary of Elementary
and Secondary Education
U.S. Department of Education
Human Services

and

George H. Sheldon
Acting Assistant Secretary for
Children and Families
U.S. Department of Health and

Dear Ms. Delise and Mr. Sheldon,

This letter demonstrates Central Montana Head Start's commitment and support of the State of Montana's application for the Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge Grant (CFDA #84.412A).

Central Montana Head Start (CMHS) provides comprehensive preschool services for low-income children and families. CMHS is a private, non-profit organization locally established in 1991 to provide children, ages three through five, with the educational opportunities they need to prepare for kindergarten in Fergus, Musselshell and Wheatland Counties.

CMHS has played an active role in advocating for early childhood services, low-income families and the need for enhanced school readiness collaboration. Board, Policy Council and staff have had integral roles through active involvement at the local, state, regional and national levels. Participation includes heavy involvement with local school districts in solidifying the collaboration to enhance school readiness, advocacy efforts at the state, regional and national levels such as the Montana State Head Start Association, the Regional Head Start Association and National Head Start Association, and involvement with a national committee that looks specifically at how federal policies affect those that reside in rural areas of the nation. This active involvement goes beyond just staff; Board members, Policy Council and parents have all been empowered to support this valuable mission.

CMHS supports this application in an effort to ensure that all children, birth to five, will have access to preschool and learning systems. This is especially true for those children with higher needs. Montana is a state that has progressively began to realize the need for services of all children 0-8. Active involvement with this grant will ensure this process continues to grow and reach those children that are not afforded these opportunities. The opportunity for programs to be supported by the capacity-building resources offered by this grant will be crucial to the success of not only the early childhood community but the entire educational system in Montana.

CMHS has for the last twenty years made large impacts on the low income population throughout central Montana. Our program has implemented program supports that are a key component for sustainability such as active parent engagement, systems alignment, early childhood workforce development, appropriate and validated screening and assessment, and data alignment.

Documented outcomes supporting parent/family support and involvement along with the efforts made in helping children get the start they need to be successful throughout their schooling proves the efforts made have been vital to many. The impact has moved beyond just those enrolled families but has aided our community in recognizing the benefits of early childhood education and informed others of the roles they can play in supporting this valuable support system.

CMHS will play an active role in helping to ensure the success of this resource by participating in planning, on state and local councils and through advocacy in supporting a community wide approach to 0-8 services throughout the counties served. CMHS will mentor other local early childhood providers to help make the quality of services available through a continuum of care.

This is an unprecedented opportunity for Montana to improve birth through five early care and learning systems, as well as to further increase access and quality to high-needs children. We appreciate this opportunity to support Montana's application for the Race to the Top, Early Learning Challenge grant. We stand with Governor Bullock and Superintendent Juneau in their request for this grant and we are ready to work as partners to implement and support this plan. Please contact me at (b)(6) with questions.

Sincerely,

(b)(6)

Executive Director



Working to strengthen
families and keep
children safe from
abuse and neglect.

October 7, 2013

Ms. Deborah S. Delisle
Assistant Secretary of Elementary and Secondary Education
U.S. Department of Education

Mr. George H. Sheldon
Acting Assistant Secretary for Children and Families
U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services

RE: Montana Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge CFDA # 84.412A

Dear Ms Delisle and Mr. Sheldon,

The Montana Children's Trust Fund Board is pleased to offer this Letter of Support for Governor Bullock's application for the Early Learning Challenge grant CFDA #84.412A. The Montana Children's Trust Fund (MCTF) mission is to reduce the occurrence of child maltreatment and increase safe, stable, and nurturing relationships for all Montana children. We do this primarily through small annual prevention grants to a variety of family support programs statewide and some limited statewide initiatives. Our grantees include a network of community-based, primary and secondary, prevention-focused family resource and support programs as well as a statewide shaken baby syndrome prevention program.

MCTF's work is focused on prevention of abuse and neglect through evidence-based education programs for parents and families about child development, the influences of adverse childhood experiences, appropriate parenting techniques and parental support.

Current studies show that to be kindergarten-ready and able to learn, children do best when they come from safe, stable, nurturing relationships free of trauma and abuse. One of the best investments we can make to prepare children for school is through fostering and growing these nurturing relationships in early childhood.

Montana CTF is financially unable to fund child maltreatment prevention programs in every identified high-risk community in the state. However, in partnership with other stakeholders, including early childhood Best Beginnings Councils, we are making inroads in prevention. Prevention

P.O. Box 4210 • Helena, MT 59604-4210
www.dphhs.mt.gov/childrenstrustfund

efforts, particularly for low-income, rural, and tribal communities, can make the difference that will enable our children to be kindergarten-ready.

These efforts are a necessary part of any effective early childhood system. As such, the Children's Trust Fund is committed to the full development of a sustainable, family-focused early childhood system. We are willing to participate in professional development opportunities, where possible coordinate with wrap-around activities and identify data indicators on how children and families are doing, and continue to build a trauma-informed cadre of grantees that create partnerships with Montana families.

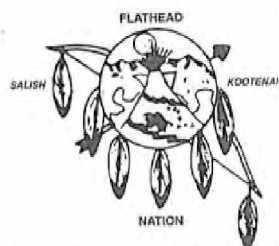
This is why we enthusiastically support the Montana Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge grant opportunity and ask you to approve the application. The Early Learning Challenge grant would permit the state and its' partners to build the capacity and improve existing programs for the high needs children of Montana.

Please consider funding this critical Early Learning Challenge application.

Sincerely,

(b)(6)

Montana Children's Trust Fund



A Confederation of the Salish,
Pend d' Oreilles
and Kootenai Tribes

THE CONFEDERATED SALISH AND KOOTENAI TRIBES OF THE FLATHEAD NATION

P.O. BOX 278
Pablo, Montana 59855
(406) 275-2700
FAX (406) 275-2806
www.cskt.org



A People of Vision

October 10, 2013

Deborah S. Delisle
Assistant Secretary of Elementary
and Secondary Education
U.S. Department of Education

and

George H. Sheldon
Acting Assistant Secretary for
Children and Families
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

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Terry Pitts

Dear Ms. Delise and Mr. Sheldon,

This letter is to confirm The Confederated Salish and Kootenai's commitment to the support of the State of Montana's application for the Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge Grant (CFDA#84.412A).

The Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes is in constant watch for collaborations to support young children and families and the resources affecting the needs identified by medical staff, educational entities, and other resources utilized by many of our families.

Currently we have entered into collaborations with our own Head Start and Early Head Start Program, Salish Kootenai College, Two Eagle River School, Kicking Horse Job Corps and all 7 Reservation School Districts in working together to generate quarterly discussions to partner in identifying educational needs for families, and students from birth to college. As we know that education is a constant in ones life. Discussions about attendance, graduation, partnerships with families.

Issues we have undertaken in the past year include:

- Attendance
- Developing a single "Kindergarten Readiness Skills List" that reflects the shared goals of all of the School Districts included in the Flathead Reservation;
- Strengthening the Partnership to ensure positive Tribal/non-Tribal working relationships and continued collaboration within our complex and diverse community;
- Opening the lines of communications for student/family , school and Tribal information sharing;
- Graduation
- And grant collaboration opportunities

Should the State be successful in obtaining the Race to the Top, Early Learning Challenge grant we look forward to a continued partnership amongst the already established "Education Leaders" here on the Flathead Reservation, and to:

- bring more players to the table to network with us in our efforts for the betterment of education opportunities for students and families throughout their lives;
- To explore the expansion of Head Start/Early Head Start (currently over 200 children on the waiting list) ensuring that pre-school is available to every 4-year old;
- To find ways to assure expanded professional development opportunities for early childhood professionals assuring the availability high of quality program opportunities for young children
- Support an expansion of the Lake County and CSKT Home Visiting Programs, through the Best Beginnings Children's Partnership (BBCP) which both follow the evidence-based "Parents as Teachers" model allowing them to track effectiveness and share data

The Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes appreciate this opportunity to support Montana's application for the Race to the Top, Early Learning Challenge grant. We stand with Governor Bullock and Superintendent Juneau in their request for this grant and we are ready to work as partners to implement and support this plan.

Sincerely,

(b)(6)

(b)(6) Chairman
CS & K Tribal Council



Salish Kootenai College

P.O. Box 70
Pablo, MT 59855
Ph. (406) 275-4800
Fax (406) 275-4801

Deborah S. Delisle
Assistant Secretary of Elementary and Secondary Education
U.S. Department of Education

and

George H. Sheldon
Acting Assistant Secretary for Children and Families
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

RE: Montana Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge CFDA # 84.412A

Dear Assistant Secretary Delisle and Acting Assistant Secretary Sheldon,

I am pleased to write this letter on behalf of Montana's Early Childhood Higher Education Consortium (ECHEC) in support of our state's application for the Race-to-the-Top Early Learning Challenge Grant. Montana's ECHEC is an organized constituency of post-secondary faculty who teach early childhood courses in the state of Montana. I have served as the chair of the ECHEC for that past four years, and can attest to the importance of this association for developing, implementing, and improving effective evidence based post-secondary early childhood programs. The collaboration among members of this group of dedicated early childhood professionals is critical for those who teach higher education courses and administer such programs. Montana is a large state with rural issues and the opportunity for early childhood professionals to network and resolve challenges is best supported through the ECHEC.

The ECHEC is thrilled about the opportunities that Montana's Early Learning Challenge grant can bring to our state. We commit to fulfilling grant activities with fidelity and enthusiasm, such as conducting the higher education inventory, or working with college deans to review and recommend licensure requirements for early childhood teachers. We have met consistently for over 20 years and the work we have accomplished is substantial, such as the work done to align our early childhood courses and objectives offered at each institution, through a process called the Faculty Learning Outcomes Council. The ECHEC was a leader in the state for collaboration that led to common outcomes and alignment of our programs. This networking included community colleges, tribal colleges, and four year institutions.

In summary, Montana's Early Childhood Higher Education Consortium is fully supportive of the Race-to-the-Top Early Learning Challenge grant, and we will work together to ensure that the grant is met with success at the post-secondary level. Thank you for your time and attention to this letter, and please contact me at the above address if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

(b)(6)

ECHEC Chair and SKC Dean of Education



October 9, 2013

Deborah S. Delisle
Assistant Secretary of Elementary and Secondary Education
U.S. Department of Education

George H. Sheldon
Acting Assistant Secretary for Children and Families
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

RE: Montana Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge CFDA #84.412A

Dear Assistant Secretary Delisle and Acting Assistant Secretary Sheldon:

The Early Childhood Project (ECP) at Montana State University has been charged with coordination of Montana's Early Care and Education Career Development system to develop and support a highly skilled and competent early childhood workforce since 1996. An engaged and diverse group of key stakeholders have participated in all development processes over the years. Ambitious goals have been set on an annual basis and achieved whereby many essential components of this grant have been developed and implemented. Highlights of that focused work include the Early Care and Education Knowledge Base (Core Knowledge and Competency Framework), the Career Path, The Practitioner Registry, the Professional Development Approval System, and Early Learning Guidelines for children birth – age 5. Additionally, we have helped develop certification programs for Infant and Toddler Caregivers, Preschool Teachers and most recently an Early Childhood Program Director Credential. All of this has been made possible through Child Care Development Fund monies through contracts with the Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services, Early Childhood Services Bureau.

The ECP has been intimately involved in the development of the STARS to Quality (TQRIS) initiative for Montana and the of database supports for the program. Additionally, the proposed STARS Coaching Framework was developed by a Work Group facilitated by the ECP in the past year. For more than ten years we have sponsored the Early Childhood Higher Education Consortium to address critical issues related to higher education and early childhood workforce development and preparation.

This grant outlines a reform agenda that will provide Montana with a governance structure capable of better serving young children, their families, and early childhood educators across sectors in a more coordinated effort. Many sections of the grant address goals and objectives that will require the Early Childhood Project to either lead the way or actively engage with others to be successful. We are eager to partake in many tasks and projects that we have only dreamed of doing over the years, such as contracting to develop a State of the Early Childhood Workforce Report and an Early Childhood Higher Education

**Department of
Health and Human
Development**

**Early Childhood
Project**

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P.O. Box 173540
Bozeman, MT 59717-3540
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Tel 406-404-1624
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Email ecp@montana.edu

Mountains & Minds

Inventory. The results of these two projects will lead to planning and policy to explore new professional development opportunities at various levels from community-based to postsecondary and link them to high school programs.

Montana currently has various data systems all of which hold important data about our early childhood system, however there has not been a focused effort to align those systems with the goal being to identify key indicators and information we need to be able to report about the status of children with high needs, early childhood educators professional development, program quality, and retention and advancement of the workforce. This will be a goal that we are ready to tackle as well. The ECP database is rich with workforce and program data that we hope to use in more effective ways to inform policy and planning.

We will look forward to elevating the work of the Early Childhood Higher Education Consortium by expanding active participation from all postsecondary institutions and with the Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education's guidance.

The Early Childhood Project's commitment to early childhood system building, and creating a knowledgeable and competent workforce through professional development in Montana is long-standing. We look ahead to continued work with new resolve and dedication to a more integrated approach across systems to achieving high quality programs and services that promote school readiness for every Montana child.

Sincerely,

(b)(6)

Director



Great Falls Public Schools

Student Services • 1100 4th Street South • P.O. Box 2429
Great Falls, Montana 59403 • 406.268.6025 • Fax 406.268.7384 www.gfps.k12.mt.us

October 4, 2013

Tara Ferriter-Smith
Instructional Specialist
Montana Office of Public Instruction
PO Box 202501
Helena, MT 59620-2501

Ms. Ferriter-Smith:

I would like to state Great Falls Public School's Intent to apply for funds from the Race to the Top; Early Learning Challenge (RTT-ELC) grant. Great Falls Public Schools currently operates a preschool program in the Skyline Center. This program is funded by ESEA Title 1, IDEA, along with grants such as the Striving Readers Grant. However, the significant limitations on these funds have limited our ability to develop the program which meets the needs of all preschool children in Great Falls.

The community of Great Falls presents unique demographics; families move into and out of Great Falls to the three Indian Reservations in our geographic region, the Blackfoot, Rocky Boy, and Fort Belknap Reservations. During the 2012-13 school year 12.89% of our student population had identified tribal memberships; 41.9% of the children attending qualified for free and reduced lunch, a number that, in the current ESEA application has increased to 45.1% with almost 300 children identified as homeless. Of the fifteen elementary schools in Great falls, ten receive ESEA Title 1 funds, with free and reduced lunch rates ranging from 98.8% to 44.1%. Of these ten elementary schools identified as greater than 40% poverty we are able to serve the five highest poverty schools in our preschool program. There is currently a waiting list for preschool services with 68 children being served and a potential need to serve more than 150 children. In addition to children living in poverty, we serve 35 IDEA eligible including children identified as having cognitive delays, autism, blindness, or hearing impairments.

Using research-based programs such as Opening Worlds of Learning and Language for Learning we have demonstrated that we can prepare children to be kindergarten-ready. In September of 2012 we found 14% of our 3, 4 and 5 year olds to be on track for kindergarten readiness, 11% needed strategic instruction, and 75% needing intensive instruction to be ready for kindergarten. Using research-based curriculums designed to address language, literacy, early mathematics and scientific development, motor and physical development, social /emotional instruction, we found 56% of our children to be kindergarten ready, 12% continuing to need strategic instruction, and 32% continuing to require intensive services. This is even more impressive when you realize these statistics include the children receiving IDEA services.

Vision Statement: All kids are engaged in learning today. . . . for life tomorrow.
Mission Statement: We successfully educate students to navigate their future.

We must also acknowledge the frustration which success has created. Because we can only serve a portion of our preschool population we are placed in the position of having to tell parents that their children will not be able to attend a program that will make a positive in their child's life today, and in the future. We have many parents moving to Great Falls asking which schools and neighborhoods qualify to attend the preschool program, they believe it is that important for their children. Our program has demonstrated the ability to improve outcomes for young children, to diverse, high needs populations, and to help close the achievement gap and foster kindergarten readiness.

Because we are the only large public preschool program in Montana, we have also become a regional center, with schools located in outlying communities seeking preschool placements for children with significant educational needs and/or disabilities. We believe we could become a preschool training model for the state of Montana, and would like to partner with other schools such as Libby, Helena, Bozeman, or Missoula to help build similar preschool programs as well as learn from their programs.

Great Falls as a community is also working to develop a community network to serve young children. The Early Childhood Coalition (ECC) is comprised of representatives from Head Start, the City County Health Department, the Alliance for Youth, Great Falls Public schools, United Ways, Quality Life Concepts (QLC) and other community organizations and leaders work together to implement a seamless, comprehensive service system to meet the needs of our community's children from prenatal to age eight.

We look forward to participating in the Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge grant to realize the great potential early education has for our children, our families, our community and our society.

Sincerely,

(b)(6)

Authorized Representative
Great Falls Public Schools



Hardin Public Schools

ELEMENTARY DISTRICT NO. 17-H & HIGH SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 1

Route 1, Box 1001
Hardin, Montana 59034-9707
(406) 665-1304

Industrial Park Subdivision
Big Horn County
Fax (406) 665-2784

October 4, 2013

Deborah S. Delisle
Assistant Secretary of Elementary and Secondary Education
U.S. Department of Education

George H. Sheldon
Acting Assistant Secretary for Children and Families
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

RE: Montana Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge CFDA # 84.412A

The Hardin Montana Public Schools have been a part of the Montana Early Reading First Project and the Montana Striving Readers Project. Involvement with these projects have helped us to develop a high quality, outcomes based early childhood center. Our district borders both the Crow Indian and Northern Cheyenne Indian reservations. Approximately 72% of our students are American Indian. This demographic, and our experience providing high quality, purposeful early childhood education uniquely qualifies us as mentors for other early childhood centers. It is our intent to act as mentors for members of the newly formed Montana Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge that may not have the experience and training that our staff enjoys. Additionally, we will provide an experienced person to manage the Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge project in our district. This person will also act as the liaison between our early learning center and centers that the Montana Office of Public Instruction requests that we mentor. We Also commit to being a part of any statewide planning and/or councils the Montana Office of Public Instruction requests of us.

Sincerely,

(b)(6)

(b)(6) director

Hardin Pubic Schools Kindergarten Readiness Center



MONTANA HEAD START ASSOCIATION
forever enriching the lives of children, families and communities

Our Mission

The Montana Head Start Association brings together families, staff, directors and friends of all Montana Head Start and Early Head Start programs through leadership, education, information and advocacy on behalf of young children, pregnant women and families in Montana.

October 8, 2013

Dear Ms. Deborah Delisle and Mr. George Sheldon,

This letter demonstrates the Montana Head Start Association's commitment and support for the State of Montana's application for the Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge Grant (CFDA #84.412A).

As our mission states the MT Head Start Association includes all levels of Head Start and Early Head Start participation and both Region VIII and Region XI programs in our state. We have partnered with the state government successfully over the past 15 years. We have a strong professional organization and continual representation at important councils and boards across Montana and within state government. As we follow the Head Start Performance Standards, we prepare children and their parents for the rigors of elementary school and life. We support our staff and the many challenges of working, education, long travel distances and complicated and high expectations. We have key membership on the Montana Best Beginnings Advisory Council as well as active membership on the 23 community councils across Montana.

The Head Start directors are very interested to take part in this opportunity. As we recently listened to our Collaboration Director explain the priorities and the process, we committed to working with the State of Montana to make this grant a reality. We see this as the first and most important opportunity to actually be able to serve Head Start eligible child along with non-Head Start eligible children in a public/private partnership. This has been a dream for many years. Many actions have been taken in the past and we have tried some temporary partnerships which were all successful, but funding was short term. The members of the Montana Head Start Association have always been willing to partner, think of creative ways to serve the most children and have strong community partners that assist limited federal dollars to go a bit farther. We have always taken part and often led systems building efforts in Montana and welcome the opportunity to step up to this challenge grant.

With the recent sequester in place, over 200 low-income, high needs children will no longer attend a Head Start in Montana. Coupled with the fact that many children across the state on Head Start wait lists, cuts to funded slots is unacceptable. It is most certainly time for all of us in Montana to take the Race to the Top seriously and make every effort to maintain comprehensive, family and child focused services for a larger number of families than we are currently able to serve. The critical parts of a strong early childhood system exist within each Head Start and Early Head Start program. Each of our programs has made very positive strides towards the expectations identified by the Federal Office of Head Start. We are eager to share our strengths and success with our state partners and also learn from them.

We take parent engagement very seriously and have consistently been successful. We take every avenue for supporting staff in their education, which is oftentimes a major effort in Montana. We partner with community agencies to achieve comprehensive screening and assessment of our children and often other children in the community. We are all currently learning about data alignment and best ways to gather, interpret and use data effectively. We have reached out to private businesses in our communities for numerous successful services and events to better support our children and families.

We stand with Governor Bullock and Superintendent Juneau in their request for this grant and we are ready to work as partners to implement and support this plan. Please contact me with any questions you might have. Thank you.

On behalf of the Montana Head Start Association,

(b)(6)

signature

Executive Director

MTHSA Executive Committee

Renee Funk, President

Pam deRosier, Vice President

Patricia Dahl, Treasurer

Viola Wood, Secretary

~ Mary Jane Standaert, Director/Consultant 2015 Lockey Helena, MT 59601 (406) 443-0620 mjs418@bresnan.net ~



HEAD START



October 8, 2013

To whom it may Concern,

HRDC Head Start of Bozeman Montana supports the application for the Race to the Top, Early Learning Challenge grant application.

The state of Montana has a high percentage of preschool age children living in poverty, and currently very limited pre kindergarten educational opportunities. Coalitions and committees around the state have assessed the educational, social emotional, health, and nutritional needs of younger children, and have increased the general public awareness of those needs. Montana is well prepared to efficiently utilize any support and assistance provided by the Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge Grant.

Our Head Start program has been very active in community wide school readiness groups in the Bozeman, Livingston, and Belgrade areas. We are in the third year of a very beneficial relationship with the Office of Public Instruction through a Striving Readers Grant. We strongly support this grant application!

Sincerely,

(b)(6)

Director

HRDC Head Start



October 8, 2013

Deborah S. Delisle
Assistant Secretary of Elementary
and Secondary Education
U.S. Department of Education
Services

and George H. Sheldon
Acting Assistant Secretary for
Children and Families
U.S. Department of Health and Human

Dear Ms. Delise and Mr. Sheldon,

On behalf of the Missoula Best Beginnings Council, which is coordinated by the Missoula Forum for Children and Youth, this letter demonstrates the council's commitment to and support of the State of Montana's application for the Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge Grant (CFDA #84.412A). Through its collaborative processes, Missoula's Best Beginnings is improving the health and developmental outcomes for young children. Together the agencies, organizations and individuals making up Best Beginnings explore early childhood systems in Missoula County, foster relationships between agencies and community members and analyze strengths and challenges to improve support for all Missoula's children and their families.

The Early Learning Challenge Grant will offer Missoula more opportunities to pursue this type of work. Additionally, through state-wide collaboration and capacity building, the grant will improve outcomes for young children throughout Montana. It will increase parent engagement, further systems alignment, better strengthen and promote an early childhood workforce, develop appropriate screening and assessment tools and align data for the most effective use of resources.

Missoula understands that Montana is ready, more so than ever before, to work to improve birth through five early care and learning systems, as well as to further increase access and quality of such systems to high-needs children. In Missoula, where funding, although limited, is currently committed to continue its Best Beginnings Council this will mean a very significant and positive strengthening of its early childhood infrastructure.

Missoula's Best Beginning Council appreciates this opportunity to support Montana's application for the Race to the Top, Early Learning Challenge grant. We stand with Governor Bullock and Superintendent Juneau in their request for this grant and we are ready to work as partners to implement and support this plan.

Please contact me at 406-721-3000 x 1022 with questions.

Sincerely,

(b)(6) (b)(6) (b)(6)

Coordinator, Missoula's Best Beginnings Council

The Missoula Forum for Children & Youth
200 W. Broadway
Missoula, MT 59802
www.missoulaforum.org



October 9, 2013

Deborah S. Delisle
Assistant Secretary of Elementary and Secondary Education
U.S. Department of Education

and

George H. Sheldon
Acting Assistant Secretary for Children and Families
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

RE: Montana Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge CFDA # 84.412A

Dear Assistant Secretary Delisle and Acting Assistant Secretary Sheldon,

Please accept this letter of support for the State of Montana's application to the Race to the Top - Early Learning Challenge grant. As the state's flagship university, and the largest institution offering students four year degrees in Early Childhood and Elementary Education, we look forward to leading this endeavor. We also look forward to future planning sessions devoted to increasing the ways in which we prepare students who will work with children from diverse backgrounds including Native Americans, high risk families, and other groups of underserved individuals. We are also excited to explore ways in which we can continue to professionalize, register, certify, and/or license individuals who work with young children before they enter the K-12 school system, and those children in the early elementary grades of our educational system. We, the undersigned, represent the collaborative commitment of the administrators at Montana State University-Bozeman.

As leaders in the state of Montana, we are committed to serving as advocates for young children, families, and the early childhood profession. In closing, we stand committed to fully supporting to the proposed Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge grant application for the State of Montana.

Office of the Dean

250 Reid Hall
P.O. Box 172940
Bozeman, MT 59717-2940

Tel (406) 994-4133
Fax (406) 994-1854

Sincerely,

(b)(6)

President
Montana State University-Bozeman

(b)(6)

Provost
Montana State University-Bozeman

(b)(6)

Dean
College of Education, Health & Human Development
Montana State University-Bozeman

(b)(6)

Associate Dean of Teaching and Learning
College of Education, Health & Human Development
Montana State University-Bozeman

(b)(6)

Department Head
Health & Human Development
Montana State University-Bozeman



Montana Child Care Resource & Referral Network

October 8, 2013

Deborah S. Delisle
Assistant Secretary of Elementary
and Secondary Education
U.S. Department of Education

and

George H. Sheldon
Acting Assistant Secretary for
Children and Families
U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services

RE: Montana Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge CFDA # 84.412A

Dear Ms. Delisle and Mr. Sheldon,

This letter is written on behalf of the Montana Resource & Referral Network which comprises representation from the eleven Directors of the Regional Child Care Resource & Referral Agencies within the state of Montana. The CCR&R Agencies are funded through the Child Care Block Grant and also supplement their programs with other contracts such as the Child & Adult Care Food Program, Part C IDEA, Healthy Mothers, and many more. Agencies also seek other funding sources and these non-federal funding allows us to play an active part in Advocacy for Early Care & Education at the State and Federal level. All the agencies concentrate their mission in the Early Childhood field. We work closely with the DPHHS- State of Montana Early Childhood Services Bureau staff to develop Program Management Plans to meet the State of Montana goals. The CCR&R Network has been a key player in the development of the Quality Improvement Rating System (STARS) and employ trained and certified Professional Development Specialists that are playing key roles in developing and carrying out Montana State approved intentional, sequential, competency based training as well as coaching and T/TA for all licensed child care providers within the State of Montana. We also reach out to other programs and individuals that are working with young children to encourage them to participate in our approved training and education.

We also work on ensuring our Family Services Staff who are working daily with the families of Montana to help them with Child Care assistance are knowledgeable with all current information and resources and able to deliver that information to the families daily. Montana is a very large and predominantly rural area and the philosophy of the agencies is to deliver services from border to border. The eleven CCR&R agencies are dedicated to reaching all the families and children within the state.

We also have a responsibility to work with the DPHHS Quality Assurance Division and Child Care Licensors. Our overall goal is to work closely to bring Early Care & Education and Child Care Licensing into similar working goals and terms; and to offer the children and families of Montana Quality Early Care & Education. We also work with the office of Public Instruction to enable our young children to transition to the School setting; to receive Early Childhood Special Education in all areas of the State, and often have conducted training to their school staff in early care and child development because we have that knowledgeable staff that can help make the child's early years successful in all settings of care and education.

We are very excited to be writing this letter of support of the Montana's Early Learning Challenge Grant. This grant will have far reaching impact on young children and their families in one of our nation's most high-need states. Fifty percent of all young children in Montana live in families earning less than 200% of the federal poverty level. The state has large populations of Native American children and children with special health care needs. A high percentage of children enter kindergarten without the skills and abilities they need to succeed.

Currently, early childhood services are provided through a disconnected collection of programs and supports. Though every attempt is made to coordinate those services, many children do not receive the critical health, social development, early learning, and other services that would enable them to develop the skills needed for kindergarten readiness.

An early childhood system that supports children ages 0-8 and their families, including prenatal care. Every Montana child shall have access to a safe and accessible, high quality early childhood education that includes developmentally appropriate curricula, knowledgeable and well-trained program staff and educators, comprehensive services that support their health, nutrition and social well-being, in an environment that respects and supports diversity. Young children that are supported are more likely to be prepared for success in K-12 and beyond.

The MT Early Learning Challenge is a system reform initiative that will allow us to achieve that vision by coordinating services for young children and their families across multiple systems, expanding implementation of early learning and development standards and quality practices, enhancing workforce development efforts and ensuring that every child has access to high-quality early learning opportunities throughout the state. The initiative sets ambitious and achievable goals at every level, from finance reform and data coordination to improved practices and increased enrollment of high needs children in high quality early care and education programs. Specific improvement activities will include: developing and implementing a statewide kindergarten readiness assessment process; integrating funding mechanisms to support a comprehensive approach to better support early childhood development; improving alignment between early learning and elementary education standards, and expanding professional development opportunities and career pathways for early childhood educators.

The Montana Child Care Resource & Referral Network's vision is to play a key role across the state by having in place some of these systems and relationships already and being enabled to build upon those. We will be a primary asset to the ECSB. The funding will allow for additional staff to work on outreach and relationship building in areas of identified need; to take leadership roles in offering intentional and sequential training for child care providers and early care educators that will meet the guidelines within the grant proposal. The Network is very excited to support this Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge Grant so that our children and families in Montana have an opportunity to higher quality early care and education. This grant is about capacity building resources and Montana has in place supporters ready to move forward to make this Grant be successful. The Network Directors look forward to the work involved.

Thank you for considering this MT Early Learning Challenge Grant.

Denise Herman,

MT CCR&R Network Chairperson



MONTANA UNIVERSITY SYSTEM
OFFICE OF THE COMMISSIONER OF HIGHER EDUCATION

2500 Broadway – PO Box 203201 – Helena, Montana 59620-3201
(406) 444-6570 – FAX (406) 444-1469

October 10, 2013

Deborah S. Delisle
Assistant Secretary of Elementary and Secondary Education
U.S. Department of Education

and

George H. Sheldon
Acting Assistant Secretary for Children and Families
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

Re: Montana Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge, CFDA #84.412A

Dear Assistant Secretary Delisle and Acting Secretary Sheldon:

Please accept this letter in support of Montana's application to the Race to the Top - Early Learning Challenge program. Montana's two-year colleges share a commitment to and responsibility for meeting workforce needs. There is no greater workforce need for working families than to have access to quality early childcare. We recognize this fundamental workforce challenge and are engaged in creating programs and partnerships that produce highly qualified early childhood professionals.

Montana's two-year colleges collaborate to provide early childhood certificate- and associate-level coursework in at least ten communities. Additional online opportunities exist for rural students to pursue coursework. All coursework, whenever or however offered, is carefully designed to articulate to Montana's four-year degree programs in early childhood.

Montana's two-year early childhood programs meet national standards established by the National Association for the Education of Young Children and the state's higher education institutions are engaged in statewide collaborations to ensure that Montana's children and families are well served.

As leaders of Montana's two-year campuses, we offer our full support to the proposed Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge program application for the State of Montana.

Sincerely,

(b)(6)

Deputy Commissioner
Two-Year and Community College Education

(b)(6)

(b)(6) CEO/Dean

Helena College

(b)(6)

(b)(6) Dean

Missoula College

(b)(6)

(b)(6) Dean

Highlands College

(b)(6)

(b)(6) Dean

Gallatin College

(b)(6)

(b)(6) President

Flathead Community College

(b)(6)

(b)(6) Dean

City College

(b)(6)

(b)(6) Chancellor

Montana State University-Northern

(b)(6)

(b)(6) President

Dawson Community College

(b)(6)

(b)(6) Chancellor

University of Montana Western

(b)(6)

(b)(6) Interim President

Miles City Community College

(b)(6)

(b)(6) CEO/Dean

Great Falls College

MONTANA STATE UNIVERSITY ~ Campuses at Billings, Bozeman, Great Falls, and Havre

THE UNIVERSITY OF MONTANA ~ Campuses at Butte, Dillon, Helena, and Missoula

Dawson Community College (Glendive) ~ Flathead Valley Community College (Kalispell) ~ Miles Community College (Miles City)



improving lives, strengthening communities

October 7, 2013

Deborah S. Delisle
Assistant Secretary of Elementary
and Secondary Education
U.S. Department of Education

and

George H. Sheldon
Acting Assistant Secretary for Children
and Families
U.S. Department of Health and Human
Services

Dear Ms. Delise and Mr. Sheldon:

This letter acknowledges Rocky Mountain Development Council, Inc. (RMDC) Head Start's commitment and support of the State of Montana's application for the Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge Grant (CFDA #84.412A). As Director of RMDC Head Start I believe this grant will forward the need for improved coordination and the capacity of quality early learning services not only in our service area (Lewis and Clark, Broadwater, and Jefferson counties) but statewide. This is truly an exciting opportunity for Montana's children and families and Montana's early childhood network.

RMDC Head Start serves 220 children and has a waiting list of 60+ children. We are a comprehensive early childhood development program that focuses on children 3-5 and their families. We believe that all eligible children should have access to a safe, accessible, high-quality early childhood education...one that includes developmentally appropriate curricula; comprehensive health, nutrition, and social/emotional services; and compassionate, well-trained staff to work with children and parents/caregivers to keep levels of engagement high. Our mission is "To be a supportive and safe learning environment for children and families by enhancing their sense of belonging and self-worth while encouraging them to reach their highest potential" and our tag line is "*Strong Families, Successful Children*". As we transition children to kindergarten each year, we hear from school personnel about how ready and well-prepared children coming from Head Start are...they are ready to continue learning...they are excited about learning...and they have the skills they need to be successful! Unfortunately, though, we hear more and more often from our kindergarten partners that more and more children are coming to kindergarten without the social and academic skills to be successful; children are falling through the cracks and as a State, we need to step up to the plate to ensure ***all children have the opportunity for early learning. Awarding this Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge to Montana will support more children having this opportunity.***

Our Head Start program has been involved in many early childhood efforts over the past several years. One of our six sites is a STARS (Montana's Quality Rating Improvement System for childcare) Level 3 site and because we believe in continual quality improvement, staff at all our sites participate in many of the STARS-required trainings. All Montana children deserve to have the opportunity to participate in high quality early care and education and Montana's early childhood workforce deserves to receive the professional development and financial incentives of STARS. We are currently beginning year three as a participant in the Office of Public Instruction's Montana Striving Readers Project grant focusing heavily on literacy

ROCKY MOUNTAIN DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL

www.rmhc.net

P.O. Box 1717 200 South Cruise Ave. Helena, MT 59624-1717 phone 406-447-1680 800-356-6544 fax 406-447-1629

Housing

Homelessness Assistance

Head Start

Rocky Mountain Preschool Center

Rocky Mountain Youth Resources

LIEAP

Weatherization

Energy Share

Area IV Agency on Aging

Daily Dinner Clubs

Senior Centers

Meals on Wheels

Foster Grandparent Program

RSVP

Senior Companion Program

Senior Transportation

Deborah S. Delisle
George H. Sheldon
Page 2

outcomes for children and professional development for staff...the results for our children are amazing...these are results that all children should have the opportunity to attain. Again, **awarding this Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge to Montana will promote improved coordination and capacity for quality early learning services and bolster the possibility that more children will have these opportunities.**

I believe that RMDC Head Start has the capacity to fully participate in helping develop a coordinated early learning system for Montana; our organization is long-standing and we pride ourselves on being high-quality, early childhood professionals. We commit to participating in every opportunity available to define a coordinated early learning system in Montana that establishes increased services for young children and their families. As we have done before, we will be an active, engaged participant by offering in-kind staff support and professional development, mentoring others, and sharing our expertise on local and State coalitions, task forces, committees, etc. We will look at how we might blend funding with other entities to bring the best possible early childhood services to more high need children and their families.

It is with high regard that we stand with Montana's Governor Steve Bullock and Superintendent Denise Juneau in their request for this Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge grant. We commit to working together to implement and support this plan and make Montana an even better place for children 0-8 and their families.

Please know that you may contact me at (406) 457-7335 or pdahl@rmdc.net with any questions.

Sincerely,

(b)(6)

(b)(6) Director
Head Start Program
Rocky Mountain Development Council, Inc.

(b)(6)

Deborah S. Delisle
Assistant Secretary of Elementary and Secondary Education
U.S. Department of Education

and

George H. Sheldon
Acting Assistant Secretary for Children and Families
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

RE: Montana Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge CFDA # 84.412A

Dear Assistant Secretary Delisle and Acting Assistant Secretary Sheldon,

As an organization of business men and women across the state, America's Edge of Montana supports proven programs that pay big dividends to businesses both today and tomorrow, strengthen communities, and get children school- and work- ready so that we have a future workforce with the knowledge, skills and abilities we need. We know that among the most effective ways to increase sales of local goods and services and create jobs is through investments in early childhood education.

Every year we send our kids to taxpayer-funded schools to learn what's needed for college and career success. In 2013 only 28 percent of Montana's high school graduates who took the ACT college admissions test met college readiness benchmarks in all core areas tested: English, math, reading and science.

Studies confirm that children in high-quality early learning programs are more likely to enter kindergarten with learning skills leading to school and workforce success. Results from the best early learning programs show that participating students have less need for special education and increased language skills and graduation rates. Students from such programs are also 22% more likely to be employed as adults and earn up to 36% more.

High-quality early learning is a building block for moving Montana's children along the educational continuum to their highest potential and ensuring Montana's businesses have the future skilled workforce they need.

We know the solution is to get more children into high-quality early learning programs.

We wholeheartedly support the efforts of Montana to seek Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge funds. We are committed to the State's vision for an early childhood system that supports children ages zero to eight and believe that the benefits of an expanded "STARS to Quality" and home-visiting program will be seen for generations, in all demographics.

The following America's Edge members in Montana endorse Montana's efforts to attain this grant.

Sincerely,

Robert Morrison, PE – President, Morrison-Maierle, Inc., Helena
Mark A. O'Neill – VP/Business Relationship Manager, Wells Fargo Bank, Butte
Mike Walker – Owner, Walker Logistics Inc., Missoula
Alan Nicholson – President, Project Management, Inc., Helena
Nick Davis – President/CIO, Montana Investment Advisors, Bozeman

Leslie Womack – President, Montana Educators Credit Union, Missoula
Ken Fichtner – Fitchner Chevrolet, Laurel
Ken Holmlund – Owner, Holmlund Lock & Key, Miles City
Jerry Schilling – CEO, Social Entrepreneur, LLC, Bozeman
Paul Tash – President, Tash Communications, Butte
Scott Atwood – Owner, Atwood Architecture, Billings
Ed Mangis – Owner, Mangis Financial Services, Helena
Jim Parker – Owner, WestRidge Creative, Missoula
Mark Munsinger, PE – Owner, Munsinger, LLC, Kalispell
Penny Rubner – Owner, Penny's Gourmet To Go, Great Falls
Thomas Butorac – Vice President, First Interstate Bank, Missoula
Cathy Bartel – Store Owner/Service Representative, Midrivers Cooperative, Lewistown
Julie Gemar Williams – President, JGW Consulting, Missoula
Lynn Compton – General Manager, Peak Health & Wellness, Great Falls
Staci Flynn - Director of Operations, Monida Healthcare Network, Missoula
Christie Anderson – Director of Special Projects, Independent Publishing, Inc., Missoula
Bob Keene – Insurance Adjuster, Travelers Insurance, Billings
Tom Reynolds – Executive Director, Montana State University Northern Foundation, Havre
Fran M. Albrecht – Executive Director, Watson Children's Shelter, Missoula
Kelly Rosenleaf – Executive Director, Child Care Resources, Missoula
Carrie Parker – Elementary Teacher, Great Falls
Eileen Carney - Professor, Flathead Valley Community College, Libby
Sharon Palmer – Broker, Lambros Realty, Missoula
Leslie Bredvik – Retired, Bozeman
Jim Watson, - Account Executive/VP, Payne West Insurance, Billings
Glen Wheeler – Claims Mgr. (Ret.), Liberty Mutual Insurance, Bonner
George Reichenbach - Manager, Reichenbach Fireworks, Billings
Roger Craft – Broker, Heart of Montana Realty, Bozeman
Rick Pyfer, - Partner, Doubek, Pyfer & Fox, Helena
Steve Harvey – EMT, Sweet Grass County Ambulance, Big Timber
Stan Smith – Manager, Big Sky Cinema, Dillon
Alex Apostle – Superintendent, Missoula County Public Schools, Missoula
Pam Peppenger – Town & Country Property Management, Libby
Jim Cashell – Sheriff (Ret.), Gallatin County, Bozeman
Diane Cashell – Principal (Ret.), Bozeman School District, Bozeman
Bubba Alsup – Agent, Western States Insurance, Missoula
Kristie Vauthier – Glacier Bank, Anaconda
Dee Straus – Health Facilities Surveyor, Great Falls
Mary Brady – School Counselor, Malta Elementary School, Malta
Rosemary Veseth – Retired, Malta
Kandy Rose – Bozeman Deaconess Hospital, Bozeman
Cookie Agney – School Trustee, Sweet Grass County, Big Timber
Ellen Smith – Retired, Billings Clinic, Billings
Mary Brydich – Sales, Terrell's Office Machines, Bozeman
David Curry – State Director, America's Edge, Butte



The Right Services to the Right People at the Right Time

October 9, 2013

Deborah S. Delisle
Assistant Secretary of Elementary
Secondary Education
U.S. Department of Education

and

George H. Sheldon
Acting Assistant Secretary and
for Children and Families
U.S. Department of Health
and Human Services

Dear Ms.Delisle and Mr.Sheldon,

This letter demonstrates AWARE, Inc.'s commitment and support of the State of Montana's application for the Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge Grant (CFDA #84.412A).

AWARE is a private, non-profit corporation that provides quality, community-based services to people with challenging mental, emotional, and sometimes physical needs. Our organization works to ensure that the people we serve achieve maximum independence, productivity and integration into the community. Our services focus on helping children and adults succeed in their community.

AWARE's Early Childhood services focuses on early intervention and social and emotional health. AWARE is the grantee for Early Head Start in Butte. Early Head Start is a community-based, family centered , wholistic child development program for families with pregnant women, infants and toddlers up to age 3. AWARE's Successful Starts program provides mental health services to the children and familes of 8 different Head Start programs across the state. Successful Starts is a comprehensive, integrated approach to preventing, identifying, and treating early childhood mental health concerns and improving the social emotional outcomes for young children, and thus school readiness. It is a systematic approach to building the capacity of Head Start and early childhood practitioners, in order to promote the social-emotional and behavioral development of children, while also providing individualized therapeutic intervention to targeted Head Start children and families. Successful Starts provides a continuum of services that offers families support and intervention depending on their needs.

AWARE's early childhood staff regularly participate in the QRIS system, and local Best Beginnings councils around the state, as well as the state level. As an active member of the Best Beginnings Social Emotional Committee, I am excited at the opportunities that this grant will bring to Montana. For years, the early childhood community has attempted systems alignment with a number of stakeholders and state departments. While there as been some slight shifting over the years, with the success of programs such as Best Beginnings, STARS to Quality and Graduation Matters, the addition of this

grant will provide a stronger momentum for Montana to improve state efforts for enhancing systems and services for children ages birth to five. It will allow our state to integrate and align resources and policies across all of the state agencies that provide funding for early childhood development and family support. This commitment is necessary in order to develop the high quality services that are essential. Of particular emphasis will be early childhood workforce development, data tracking and alignment, the measurement of outcomes and progress, and supporting high quality, accountable programs.

Our state needs to promote and support school readiness in all of the child development domains, particularly the social and emotional domain. Almost all of Montana's Best Beginnings Community Assessments indicated that early childhood mental health needs are high in the communities they serve. Social and emotional health is a foundation for school readiness and this grant will allow us to focus more heavily in this area. All of this is necessary in order to ensure that all of Montana children are ready for kindergarten, laying the foundation for a successful academic career.

Across the state, agencies are challenged in meeting the needs of Montana's tribal and rural families. Challenges include finding and retaining quality staff, travel and sustainability costs, and accessibility, including technology. This investment in the youngest citizens of our state will allow AWARE to target those children who are the highest in need, and to expand our quality services for children and families, particularly low-income families, reaching children and families in rural and tribal communities.

AWARE is committed to the continuation of our role in the planning and implementation efforts of the state-wide, local and state councils. AWARE appreciates this opportunity to support Montana's application for the Race to the Top, Early Learning Challenge grant. We stand, enthusiastically, with Governor Bullock and Superintendent Juneau in their request for this grant and we are ready to work as partners to implement and support this plan.

Please contact me at (b)(6) or (b)(6) should you have any questions.

Sincerely,

(b)(6)

AWARE Early Childhood Services Director
2300 Regent Street, Suite 103
Missoula, MT 59801



**Best Beginnings
Children's Partnership (BBCP)**
Serving the Flathead Reservation & Lake County

October 10, 2013

Deborah S. Delisle
Assistant Secretary of Elementary
and Secondary Education
U.S. Department of Education

and

George H. Sheldon
Acting Assistant Secretary for
Children and Families
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

Dear Ms. Delise and Mr. Sheldon,

This letter demonstrates the Best Beginnings Children's Partnership commitment and support of the State of Montana's application for the Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge Grant (CFDA #84.412A).

The *Partnership* is a unique collaboration between Lake County Public Health and the Social Services Department of the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes (CSKT). This collaboration includes active partners representing diverse disciplines all who work with young children and their families including, but not limited to: local hospitals, CSKT Housing Authority, all Reservation School Districts, CSKT Tribal Health, CSKT Early Childhood Services (Head Start & Early Head Start), Salish & Kootenai College, CSKT Education Department, local private childcares & preschools, parents, etc. The purpose of the Partnership is to work together to identify innovative and revenue-neutral solutions to local early childhood needs.

Currently, our Partnership has undertaken several efforts identified in our early childhood needs assessment including:

- Developing a single "Kindergarten Readiness Skills List" that reflects the shared goals of all of the School Districts included in the Flathead Reservation;
- Developing audience-specific materials and supports that improve parent engagement as well as assist pre-school & childcare professionals nurture the development of these readiness skills from birth to five years of age;
- Creating a broad-based/cross-discipline distribution plan for the dissemination of this information relying on both traditional and non-traditional sources including primary care physicians, preschools, childcare professionals, social services providers, Housing Authority staff, Head Start, school districts, etc.;
- Putting in place a referral system for all expectant mothers on the Reservation to receive outreach from Public Health and/or the Tribal Home Visiting Program to ensure that every new mother, regardless of background, is provided information on the supports available to her and her child;
- Identifying and providing ongoing professional development opportunities for childcare professionals; and

Best Beginnings Children's Partnership (BBCP)

Serving the Flathead Reservation & Lake County

Page 2

- Strengthening the Partnership to ensure positive Tribal/non-Tribal working relationships and continued collaboration within our complex and diverse community.

Although the Partnership has accomplished much in the two years since its inception, we are limited to a small amount of funding through the State of Montana's MIECHV-ID grant, which will expire in September of 2014. This expiring funding has largely been expended to improve the capacity of the early childhood network and help with the costs of its ongoing operations. Should the State of Montana succeed in its Race to the Top proposal, we hope that there will be the opportunity to undertake some of the other identified local needs including:

- Expansion of Head Start/Early Head Start (currently over 125 children on the waiting list) ensuring that pre-school is available to every 4-year old;
- Continued and expanded professional development opportunities for early childhood professionals assuring the availability high of quality programs for young children;
- Support and expansion of the Lake County and CSKT Home Visiting Programs, which both follow the evidence-based "Parents as Teachers" model allowing them to track effectiveness and share data; and
- Support for the ongoing organizational development and early childhood network collaboration efforts provided by the Partnership as its funding expires in September of 2014.

We appreciate this opportunity to support Montana's application for the Race to the Top, Early Learning Challenge grant. We stand with Governor Bullock and Superintendent Juneau in their request for this grant and we are ready to work as partners to implement and support this plan.

Please contact me at (b)(6) with any questions you may have.

Sincerely, (b)(6)

(b)(6)

(b)(6) Lake County Coordinator
Best Beginnings Children's Partnership

Additional Partnership Steering Committee Members:

(b)(6) MPH, RN
Health Services Director
Lake County Public Health

(b)(6) BA
Home Visiting Program Supervisor
Lake County Public Health

(b)(6) Director
Childcare Services
Salish & Kootenai College

(b)(6) Director
Fun & Fancy Free Early Learning Center

(b)(6) Department Head
Tribal Social Services
Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes

(b)(6) MSW
Home Visiting Project Manager
Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes

(b)(6) MSW, LCSW
Private Practice
Children's Behavioral Health

(b)(6) CSKT Coordinator
Best Beginnings Children's Partnership

**BILLINGS**

615 N. 19th Street
Billings, MT 59101

Ph: (406) 245-7233
Fax: (406) 245-1260

JOLIET

P.O. Box 33
Joliet, MT 59041

Ph: (406) 962-3012
Fax: (406) 962-3049

LAUREL

410 Colorado Ave.
Laurel, MT 59044

Ph: (406) 628-5870
Fax: (406) 628-5870

LOCKWOOD

1932 Hwy 87 E.
Billings, MT 59101

Ph: (406) 867-6204
Fax: (406) 867-6222

**RED LODGE**

P.O. Box 866
Red Lodge, MT 59068

Ph: (406) 446-0100
Fax: (406) 446-0100

October 7, 2013

Deborah S. Delisle
Assistant Secretary of Elementary and Secondary Education
U.S. Department of Education
and
George h. Sheldon
Acting Assistant Secretary for Children and Families
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

Dear Ms. Delise and Mr. Sheldon,

On behalf of the Board of Directors of Head Start, Inc., I am writing this letter of support for the State of Montana's application for the Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge Grant (CFDA #84.412A).

Head Start, Inc. serves 360 low income preschoolers ages 3-5 in two Montana counties—Yellowstone and Carbon. Our program has a strong reputation for preparing low income children for success in kindergarten and for assisting parents in becoming advocates for their children's education. In the communities we serve—Billings, Lockwood, Laurel, Joliet and Red Lodge—Head Start is the only alternative for low income families to provide their children with high quality preschool education. We have long waiting lists for our services, a strong indication that there are many more eligible and interested families than we are able to serve.

We support this grant because Montana has so many unserved and under-served low income preschoolers who enter kindergarten unprepared with the skills and background knowledge necessary to be successful. Unless children are fortunate to be in Head Start, many do not receive the critical health, dental, and mental health services they require as well high quality early childhood education that they need and deserve to have. Fifty percent of all young children in Montana live in families earning less than 200% of the federal poverty level. The parents of these children cannot afford private preschool or even higher quality, licensed daycare. Their children enter public school at an extreme disadvantage when measured against their more fortunate peers who have access to early childhood services.

If Montana is successful in receiving this grant, it presents an unprecedented opportunity for the State to improve birth through five early care and learning systems, as well as to increase further the access to quality services for high-needs children.

Head Start, Inc. is excited about this application and looks forward to partnering with the state to improve and expand educational opportunities for our youngest citizens.

(b)(6)

Executive Director

BLACKFEET EARLY CHILDHOOD CENTER

HEAD START PHONE (406) 338-7370 • FAX (406) 338-7030

EARLY HEAD START (406) 338-3991 • FAX (406) 338-7175

CHILD CARE (406) 338-2626 • FAX (406) 338-5833

October 7, 2013

Deborah S. Delisle
Assistant Secretary of Elementary
and Secondary Education
U.S. Department of Education

and

George H. Sheldon
Acting Assistant Secretary for
Children and Families
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

Dear Ms. Delise and Mr. Sheldon,

This letter demonstrates the Blackfeet Early Childhood Center commitment and support of the State of Montana's application for the Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge Grant (CFDA #84.412A).

The Blackfeet Early Childhood Center is located on the Blackfeet Indian Reservation in Browning, Montana. The Head Start serves 290 low income children and the Early Head Start serves 115 low income children.

The Blackfeet Early Childhood Center has been affected by the Sequestration Cut this year. The Head Start was cut 5.826% and the Early Head Start 4.148%. The center would fully support this application for the fact that it will benefit our cliental.

The Blackfeet Early Childhood Center serves children birth thru five years of age. Research has clearly showed that children who have attended Head Start are more prepared for Kindergarten. Our program serves the most needy families and there are still those that are on the waiting list. I am confident that this grant would benefit the children and families of the Blackfeet Indian Reservation and the State of Montana:

- This is an unprecedented opportunity for Montana to improve birth through five early care and learning systems, as well as to further increase access and quality to high-needs children
- Montana should take action to assure access to preschool for all four-year-olds, and otherwise improve access to quality programs, particularly for high-needs children
- Parent engagement, systems alignment, early childhood workforce development, appropriate and validated screening and assessment, and data alignment, are critical for meaningful systems change and quality investments in our state
- We appreciate this opportunity to support Montana's application for the Race to the Top, Early Learning Challenge grant. We stand with Governor Bullock and Superintendent Juneau in their request for this grant and we are ready to work as partners to implement and support this plan.

Please contact me at (b)(6) with questions.

Sincerely,

(b)(6)

(b)(6) Acting Director



October 2, 2013

Deborah S. Delisle
Assistant Secretary of Elementary
and Secondary Education
U.S. Department of Education

and

George H. Sheldon
Acting Assistant Secretary for
Children and Families
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

Dear Ms. Delise and Mr. Sheldon,

Butte 4-C's strongly supports the State of Montana's application for the Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge Grant (CFDA #84.412A).

Butte 4-C's is a non-profit child care resource and referral agency serving children and families in Southwest Montana for the past 39 years. We provide a wide variety of services and programs. We manage the state funded scholarship program to assist working families pay for child care. We provide assistance to individuals in starting and operating a child care business and offer professional development opportunities and workshops for early care and education professionals. We are also a sponsor of the Child and Adult Care Food Program. Additionally we provide professional supervised visitation services for families dealing with child custody issues or court ordered visitation and offer community-wide parenting classes. Most recently we have taken an active role in our Community Council, which is focused on creating an early childhood infrastructure in our local community. The growth of the Community Council and dedication of the members to early childhood needs, programs, and systems has truly been inspiring.

Through our work with the Early Childhood Services Bureau and the Best Beginning Advisory Council we are aware of this extraordinary opportunity for our state to focus on and improve early care and education for young children. Our state is committed to providing high quality, affordable child care to Montana families in addition to preparing children to be ready to enter kindergarten. It is important for us to take the necessary steps to allow all four-year-old children access to preschool. This increases access to quality services, but it also gives all children the opportunity to more adequately prepare to enter kindergarten.

This grant opportunity will unite many partners who will engage and work to best serve the early care and education needs of young children in our state. Parents, family members, early childhood professionals, community stakeholders, educators, and other professionals will all come together with a goal of creating and investing in high quality early learning and development programs in addition to a coordinated system of services for children and families in an effort to ultimately increase graduation rates and better prepare our children for work opportunities.

The Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge Grant is the perfect opportunity for the State of Montana to move forward with our goals. Butte 4-C's supports Governor Bullock and Superintendent Juneau in their request for this grant. We look forward to the many great possibilities that await young children and families in Montana.

Sincerely,

(b)(6)

Executive Director



October 8, 2013

Deborah S. Delisle
Assistant Secretary of Elementary
and Secondary Education
U.S. Department of Education

and

George H. Sheldon
Acting Assistant Secretary for
Children and Families
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

Dear Ms. Delise and Mr. Sheldon,

The Butte Community Council strongly supports the State of Montana's application for the Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge Grant (CFDA #84.412A).

The Butte Community Council was officially formed two years ago with the goal of strengthening the early childhood systems in our community and building additional infrastructure to move our community forward to better serve young children and families. Our membership is diverse and includes a wide variety of professionals who work with and provide services to children and families. We have outlined our goals and are strategically working to meet them. We have focused time and energy on building social and emotional skills in children in addition to preparing them to enter kindergarten. We are very aware that the quality of care and education a child receives early in life greatly impacts his or her success later in life. Our Council is focused on setting goals that will make a positive difference in a child's life during the early formative years in an effort to make positive differences later in life.

Through my work with the Best Beginnings Advisory Council, I am aware that these are also the goals of the State of Montana for young children across our state. This grant opportunity will allow us to concentrate on providing high quality, affordable child care to families in addition to providing access to preschool and increasing school readiness for all children.

The Butte Community Council brings together many partners who are all dedicated to meeting the needs of young children and families in our community. This grant will connect many more partners to best serve all of the young children across the state as we commit to investing in high quality early care and education.

The Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge Grant is a great opportunity for the State of Montana, and the Butte Community Council is pleased to support Governor Bullock and Superintendent Juneau in their request for this grant.

Sincerely,

(b)(6)

Butte Community Council Coordinator



1600 Ellis Street, Unit 1A • Bozeman, MT 59715 • 406 587-7786 • 800 962-0418 • Fax: 406 587-1682

October 9, 2013

Deborah S. Delisle
Assistant Secretary of Elementary
and Secondary Education
U.S. Department of Education

and

George H. Sheldon
Acting Assistant Secretary for
Children and Families
U.S. Department of Health and
Human Services

Dear Ms. Delise and Mr. Sheldon,

I am writing this letter in support of and to demonstrate the commitment of Child Care Connections to the State of Montana's application for the Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge Grant (CFDA #84.412A). Child Care Connections (CCC) was founded in 1987 to respond to the growing need for child care as women with young children entered the workforce in large numbers. We are the only Child Care Resource and Referral agency serving the communities of Gallatin, Park and Meagher Counties. Since our inception, CCC has striven to improve the quality of child care in order to support the development needs of young children. CCC works to improve access to child care for difficult to serve populations such as infants, children with special needs, low-income families, minority children and families who need part-time care. CCC has been actively involved in community education and advocacy regarding the early childhood profession.

Our mission is to advocate for the well-being and quality care of children by supporting early care educators, families and the communities we serve.

We support quality child care through:

- Child care referral and financial assistance for families
- Nutrition education for families and child care providers
- Early childhood training and technical support for child care providers
- Safety programs for children
- Family and community outreach
- Professional development for Early Childhood Professionals

Child Care Connections is very active within the early childhood systems at the state and local levels. Some examples of our partner coalitions include:

- Montana Association for the Education of Young Children, Montana Advocates for Children, Child Care Aware and the Montana Child Care Resource and Referral Network
- Yellowstone Area Workforce Investment System
- Bozeman Business and Professional Women

- Gallatin and Park Counties Best Beginnings Early Childhood Councils
- We are the Child and Adult Food Program Sponsor for our three county area
- Buckle-Up Montana site and Safe Kids World Wide partner
- Gallatin/Park County Health Department Healthy Behaviors committee
- State and local school readiness teams
- Bozeman Area Child Care Association
- Belgrade Early Childhood Group
- Bozeman, Belgrade, Livingston and Gardner Chambers of Commerce

Child Care Connections has a twenty-six year history of commitment to improving the lives of families and children through our partnerships and services listed above. In addition, we have a well-educated and passionate staff. We are very excited of be part of the opportunity for Montana to improve birth through five early care and learning systems, as well as to increase access and quality to services to high needs children. We are especially excited about the plans to invest in kindergarten-ready children and the expansions of services for children and families. Montana should take action to assure access to preschool for all four year olds and otherwise improve access to quality programs. Parent engagement, systems alignment, early childhood workforce development, appropriate and validated screening and assessment, and data alignment are critical for meaningful systems change and quality investments in our state. The Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge has afforded Montana the opportunity to strengthen the linkages between and commitment of public and community-based partners in developing a high-quality early learning plan for children in our state. Awarding an Early Learning Challenge grant to Montana would provide the capacity-building resources needed to implement that plan.

Child Care Connections is confident that the plans to invest in early childhood will positively impact the families and child care providers we work with every day. It is our belief that this grant opportunity will lead to higher quality care for all children in Montana, and we are committed to the partnership.

We appreciate this opportunity to support Montana's application for the Race to the Top, Early Learning Challenge grant. We stand with Governor Bullock and Superintendent Juneau in their request for this grant and we are ready to work as partners to implement and support this plan. Please contact me at (b)(6) or (b)(6) with questions.

Sincerely,

(b)(6)

(b)(6)

Executive Director

(b)

Child Care Connections

Child Care Partnerships



"It's For the Kids!"

901 N. Benton
Helena, MT
59601

406-443-4608
1-888-244-5368
Fax: 406-443-6186

www.childcarepartnerships.org

October 7, 2013

Deborah S. Delisle
Assistant Secretary of Elementary
and Secondary Education
U.S. Department of Education

and

George H. Sheldon
Acting Assistant Secretary for
Children and Families
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

Dear Ms. Delise and Mr. Sheldon,

This letter demonstrates the Child Care Partnerships commitment and support of the State of Montana's application for the Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge Grant (CFDA #84.412A).

Child Care Partnerships (CCP) is a Child Care Resource and Referral Agency in Montana. CCP assists families by authorizing scholarships for child care assistance, offering parenting education, and linking families to resources in the community. In addition, CCP assist child care providers in becoming licensed, workshops to enhance providers' skills and improve the quality of their child care, linking providers to resources in the community.

Child Care Partnerships has a long standing excellent working relationship with the all departments of the State of Montana and would welcome the opportunity to work together in implementing the grant.

CCP has been actively involved in early childhood and committed to children and families at a local and statewide level since 1984. This grant would enable changes to be made statewide that will assist in improving the quality of all child care providers. This would give access to higher quality child care to some of Montana's most needy and high risk children and families.

This is an unprecedented opportunity for Montana to improve birth through five early care and learning systems, as well as to further increase access and quality to high-needs children.

Parent engagement, systems alignment, early childhood workforce development, appropriate and validated screening and assessment, and data alignment, are critical for meaningful systems change and quality investments in our state.

We appreciate this opportunity to support Montana's application for the Race to the Top, Early Learning Challenge grant. We stand with Governor Bullock and Superintendent Juneau in their request for this grant and we are ready to work as partners to implement and support this plan. Please contact me at 406-443-4608 with questions.

Sincerely,

(b)(6)

Executive Director



3335 LT. MOSS RD.
MISSOULA, MT 59804
800-914-4779
406-549-6413
406-542-0143 FAX

612 E. MAIN ST. STE. D
BOZEMAN, MT 59715
406-522-4059
406-522-4140 FAX

1725 MONTANA HWY 35
KALISPELL, MT 59901
886-755-2425
406-755-2425
406-755-2426 FAX

October 9, 2013

Deborah S. Delisle
Assistant Secretary of Elementary & Secondary Education
U.S. Department of Education

George H. Sheldon
Acting Assistant Secretary for Children and Families
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

Dear Ms. Delisle & Mr. Sheldon:

The Child Development Center is submitting this letter in support of Montana's application for the Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge Grant (CFDA #84.412A).

The Child Development Center has been providing early intervention services to young children and families across the seven counties of Western Montana, since 1975. We are involved in the state services for young children and provide a variety of interventions in our area of the state, including Part C services, Child Find, Family Education and Support, and Waiver services focused on keeping children in their communities with families, and early autism waiver services. We serve around 1,300 individuals each year. We utilize a home visiting model to provide case management and family training to children who have or who are at risk for a developmental disability.

Our Early Intervention programs are desperate for resources that would provide funding for additional children, as well as resources for public awareness to assist us in reaching all children who would benefit from our services. Our services provide the boost to children for their entire life, at a cost effective price. The benefits of receiving this grant for Montana's children are profound.

I urge you to fund Montana's proposal for this needed grant. If you have any questions, please contact me at the Missoula address listed above.

Sincerely,

(b)(6)

Executive Director



Child Start Inc., Head Start
Serving the families of
Missoula, Mineral, Granite, Powell, and Sanders Counties
1001 Worden, Missoula, MT 59802
Phone (406) 728-5460 / Fax (406) 728-5566

October 10, 2013

Deborah S. Delisle
Assistant Secretary of Elementary
and Secondary Education
U.S. Department of Education

George H. Sheldon
Acting Assistant Secretary for
Children and Families
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

Dear Ms. Delise and Mr. Sheldon,

This letter demonstrates Child Start Inc., Head Start's commitment and support of the State of Montana's application for the Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge Grant (CFDA #84.412A).

Child Start Inc. Head Start has been serving children in Granite, Mineral, Missoula, Powell, and Sanders Counties since 1965. Child Start Inc. provides comprehensive services to the poorest families in the areas of nutrition, health, mental health, social services, disabilities, and school readiness. Child Start Inc. serves 336 children and families each year and for the past three years, has had over 100 children on the waiting list.

- This is an unprecedented opportunity for Montana to improve birth through five early care and learning systems, as well as to further increase access and quality to high-needs children
- Montana should take action to assure access to preschool for all four-year-olds, and otherwise improve access to quality programs, particularly for high-needs children
- Parent engagement, systems alignment, early childhood workforce development, appropriate and validated screening and assessment, and data alignment, are critical for meaningful systems change and quality investments in our state.

We appreciate this opportunity to support Montana's application for the Race to the Top, Early Learning Challenge grant. Child Start Inc. stands with Governor Bullock and Superintendent Juneau in their request for this grant and we are ready to work as partners to implement and support this plan. Please contact me with questions.

Sincerely,

(b)(6)

Director

Child Start Inc.

(b)(6)



Deborah S. Delisle
Asst. Secretary of Elementary & Secondary Education
U.S. Department of Education

Monday, October 07, 2013

RE: Montana Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge CFDA # 84.412A

Dear Ms. Delisle,

As Executive Director of ChildWise Institute in Helena, Montana, I am writing to endorse and support Montana's Early Learning Challenge proposal. I strongly encourage the U.S. Department of Education and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to award funding to Montana for this important initiative.

ChildWise Institute exists to elevate the wellbeing of Montana's children. In consideration of the importance of early childhood development and education, we have deep concerns over the future of Montana's children. **We believe our State leadership's vision for an early childhood system in Montana is very thoughtful, very actionable, and will produce positive outcomes and impact for our children and their families.**

Of particular interest to ChildWise in this vision is reducing Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE's). As proven by the ACE Study (a result of collaborative research between Kaiser Permanente and the CDC), reducing ACE's is a key factor in helping children do well in school and learning. One of our Board members is Dr. Robert Anda, co-principal of the ACE Study.

Fifty percent of all young children in Montana live in families earning less than 200% of the federal poverty level. The ACE Study confirms that living in poverty produces ACE's in children, and thus may inhibit proper brain development, which results in a reduced ability to learn.

We are happy to see our State include reducing ACE's as part of its bold and inspiring vision for early childhood systems. ChildWise will make its staff and resources available to collaborate with the State of Montana in executing this vision. Our expertise in *Advancing Awareness, Accelerating Knowledge, and Advocating for Change* seems to be a perfect fit in helping this vision become a reality. Our own leadership would be pleased and honored to participate on committees and advisory boards for the **Montana Race To The Top Early Learning Challenge**.

Thank you for your consideration of investing dollars where they will produce positive impact and outcomes!

Todd Garrison

ChildWise Institute

Executive Director – Curator

The Chippewa Cree Tribe of the Rocky Boy's Reservation

Phone: (406) 395-4478 or 4210 - Finance Office
(406) 395-4282 or 4321 - Business Committee

31 Agency Square
Box Elder, Montana 59521

October 3, 2013

Deborah S. Delisle
Assistant Secretary of Elementary and Secondary Education
U.S. Department of Education
And
George H. Sheldon
Acting Assistant Secretary for Children and Families
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

RE: *Montana Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge CFDA # 84.412*

In Montana and across the country, too many children are falling behind, often dropping out of high school or graduating without the skills and knowledge required to attend college or enter the workforce. The evidence is increasingly abundant that trying to address the achievement gap must start before our children enter kindergarten. We know that investing in high quality early learning and development programs and a coordinated system of services for children and families can increase graduation rates and will better prepare our kids to be tomorrow's workforce. In fact, every dollar invested in early childhood programs saves nine dollars down the road.

Governor Steve Bullock has a vision of an early childhood system in Montana that prepares children to be kindergarten-ready by supporting children ages 0-8 and their families, including prenatal care. Our tribal communities are an important part of this vision and we look forward to working with Governor Bullock to better serve all children and families across the state.

Governor Bullock and Superintendent Juneau are partnering to write the proposal that if successful will: prepare kindergarten-ready children, expand access to quality services for children and families, especially to low-income, rural and tribal communities; raises standards for early childhood providers, incorporates and builds on existing programs like Head Start, STARS to Quality and Graduation Matters, increases coordination of wrap-around services, engages community stakeholders and creates partnerships with families and strengthens and promotes the early childhood workforce.

The Chippewa Cree Tribe of the Rocky Boy's Reservation, Stone Child College, Rocky Boy Schools, Box Elder Schools and the Planning Department stand firmly in support of this important work.

(b)(6)

(b)(6) Chairman Chippewa Cree Tribe

(b)(6)

(b)(6)

(b)(6) President SCC

(b)(6)

(b)(6)

(b)(6) Superintendent of Schools

Box Elder Schools

(b)(6)

(b)(6)

(b)(6) Director CCT Planning

(b)(6)

(b)(6)

(b)(6) Superintendent of Schools, Rocky Boy Schools

(b)(6)

(b)(6)

(b)(6) Director, Rocky Boy Headstart



October 3, 2013

Deborah S. Delisle
Assistant Secretary of Elementary
and Secondary Education
U.S. Department of Education

and

George H. Sheldon
Acting Assistant Secretary for
Children and Families
U.S. Department of Health
and Human Services

Dear Ms. Delise and Mr. Sheldon,

This letter demonstrates DEAP Child Care Education and Support's commitment and support of the State of Montana's application for the Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge Grant (CFDA #84.412A).

DEAP provides a multitude of services to young children and their families including delivery of the Child Care Resource and Referral services to families and child care providers. Currently, DEAP CCES provides Best Beginnings Scholarship services to over 175 low income families in a very rural portion of Montana where access to higher quality services including child care and preschool is difficult, at best, even more so for our high/special-needs children. The Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge Grant is an unprecedented opportunity for Montana to improve birth through five early care and learning systems, as well as to further increase access and quality of these services to high-needs children.

Currently, early childhood services are provided through a disconnected collection of programs and supports. Though every attempt is made to coordinate those services, many children do not receive the critical health, social development, early learning, and other services that would enable them to develop the skills needed for kindergarten readiness. An early childhood system that supports children ages 0-8 and their families, including prenatal care is essential to every child receiving quality care at every level. Every Montana child should have access to a safe and accessible, high quality early childhood education that includes developmentally appropriate curricula, knowledgeable and well-trained program staff and educators, comprehensive services that support their health, nutrition and social well-being, in an environment that respects and supports diversity. Young children that are supported are more likely to be prepared for success in K-12 and beyond.

The MT Early Learning Challenge is a system reform initiative that will allow Montana and thus DEAP CCES to achieve that vision by coordinating services for young children and their families across multiple systems, expanding implementation of early learning and development standards and quality practices, enhancing workforce development efforts and ensuring that every child has access to high-quality early learning opportunities throughout the state. The initiative sets ambitious and achievable goals at every level, from finance reform and data coordination to improved practices and increased enrollment of high needs children. Specific improvement activities will include: developing and implementing a statewide kindergarten readiness assessment

Miles City Office

2200 Box Elder
Miles City, Montana 59301
(406) 234-6034
(800) 224-6034
fax: (406) 234-7018
www.deapmt.org

Colstrip Offices

P.O. Box 2243
Colstrip, Montana 59323
(406) 748-4629
(866) 403-4629
fax: (406) 748-4629
or
(406) 748-3183
(866) 224-7355
fax: (406) 748-2659

Glendive Offices

120 West Towne
Glendive, Montana 59330
(406) 377-4909
(800) 578-4909
fax: (406) 377-6927

Skyreach Youth Home

306 Georgetown Drive
Glendive, Montana 59330
(406) 377-8600
fax: (406) 377-8600



process, integrating funding mechanisms to support a comprehensive approach to better support early childhood development, improving alignment between early learning and elementary education standards and expanding professional development opportunities and career pathways for early educators. With the implementation of the Early Learning Challenge Grant, Montana could take action to assure access to preschool for all four-year-olds, and otherwise improve access to quality programs, particularly for high-needs children.

We appreciate this opportunity to support Montana's application for the Race to the Top, Early Learning Challenge grant. We stand with Governor Bullock and Superintendent Juneau in their request for this grant and we are ready to work as partners to implement and support this plan. Please contact me at 406-234-6034 or email at alohrke@deapmt.org with questions.

Sincerely,

Angie Lohrke, B.S.
Childcare Education & Support Program Director

Miles City Office

2200 Box Elder
Miles City, Montana 59301
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fax: (406) 377-8600



THE H-LINE'S COMMUNITY ACTION AGENCY

"PEOPLE HELPING PEOPLE HELP THEMSELVES."

October 8, 2013

Deborah S. Delisle
 Assistant Secretary of Elementary
 and Secondary Education
 U.S. Department of Education
 Services

and

George H. Sheldon
 Acting Assistant Secretary for
 Children and Families
 U.S. Department of Health and Human

Dear Ms. Delise and Mr. Sheldon,

This letter demonstrates District 4 HRDC Child Care Link's commitment and support of the State of Montana's application for the Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge Grant (CFDA #84.412A).

District 4 HRDC Child Care Link is one of Montana's eleven child care resource and referral agencies. Located in North Central Montana, District 4 HRDC Child Care Link serves the residents of Blaine, Hill, and Liberty Counties. Our service delivery area includes both Fort Belknap Indian Reservation and Rocky Boy's Reservation. According to the 2012 Montana Kids Count book there are 1,998 children under age 5 in the three county area. The poverty rate for children under age 18 in Blaine County (30%), Hill County (26%) and Liberty County (28%) exceed the poverty rate for Montana of 21%.

Our program administers the Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship Program, offers parenting information, parenting classes, child development information, as well as referrals for parents and other caregivers to other programs/agencies, as appropriate. Our program also offers services to early care and education professionals, including new provider recruitment, new provider orientation, professional development opportunities, coaching, and technical assistance for child care providers. In addition, our program offers support for the five STARS to Quality registered or licensed child care facilities from our service delivery area.

District 4 HRDC Child Care Link has been a member of Hill County's Early Childhood Investment Team (ECIT) since its inception in 2004. ECIT has brought Hill County programs and agencies dedicated to early childhood issues together to provide coordinated services to the children of our community.

A member of the Montana Child Care Resource and Referral Network, District 4 HRDC Child Care Link collaborates to provide statewide leadership to shape collaborations and strengthen regional child care resource and referral agencies and other partners to build a diverse, professional, high quality early care and education system accessible to all Montana families.

HRDC is an equal opportunity employer and provider.

Child Care Link • Domestic Abuse Program • ENERGY • Employment and Training
 Northern Montana Child Development Center • Weatherization

Montana's Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge will help build capacity not only in our service delivery area but also throughout the State of Montana. In addition, the Early Learning Challenge grant provide funds to improve and expand access to existing programs with the goal of developing an early childhood system that prepares children to be kindergarten-ready by supporting children ages 0-8 and their families. Research has shown that investing in high quality early learning and development programs and a coordinated system of services for children and families can increase graduation rates and enhance workforce development.

In addition, Montana's Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge will expand professional development opportunities and career pathways for early childhood professionals. As a child care resource and referral agency, District 4 HRDC Child Care Link is charged with providing professional development opportunities for early childhood care providers and educators in our three county service delivery area. The Early Learning Challenge will help expand our intentional, sequential, competency based and evidence based trainings which will ultimately strengthen Montana's early childhood workforce.

This grant will provide the resources to allow collaboration between public and community-based partners to ensure that Montana's youngest have access to safe and accessible, high quality early childhood education that includes developmentally appropriate curricula, knowledgeable and well-trained program staff and educators, and comprehensive services that support their health, nutrition and social well-being, in an environment that respects and supports diversity.

District 4 HRDC Child Care Link is pleased to support Montana's application for the Race to the Top, Early Learning Challenge grant. We stand with Governor Bullock and Superintendent Juneau in their request for this grant and we are ready to work as partners to implement and support this plan. Please contact me at 265-6743extension 1110 with questions.

Sincerely,

(b)(4)

(b)(6) Program Director
District 4 HRDC Child Care Link
2229 5th Avenue
Havre, MT 59501

HRDC is an equal opportunity employer and provider.

Child Care Link • Domestic Abuse Program • ENERGY • Employment and Training
Northern Montana Child Development Center • Weatherization



HRDC

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OCT 14 2013
DISTRICT 6 HUMAN
RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT
COUNCIL
COMMUNITY SERVICE DIVISION

DISTRICT 6 HUMAN RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL

Suite 203 Centennial Plaza
300 First Ave. N.
Lewistown, MT 59457

(406) 535-7488
Toll free in MT - 1-800-766-3018
Fax - 535-2843
Fed. I.D. # 81-0382167

October 2, 2013

Deborah S. Delisle
Assistant Secretary of Elementary
and Secondary Education
U.S. Department of Education

and

George H. Sheldon
Acting Assistant Secretary for
Children and Families
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

Dear Ms. Delise and Mr. Sheldon,

This letter demonstrates the Child Care Resource & Referral / District 6 Human Resources Development Council commitment and support of the State of Montana's application for the *Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge Grant* (CFDA #84.412A).

District 6 Human Resources Development Council is a private non-profit community action organization which manages a number of grants for families of low income, including Child Care Resource and Referral, the WIC Nutrition program, the Montana Tobacco Use Prevention Program, Employment and Training programs, Low Income Energy Assistance, Weatherization, and Housing Assistance. We serve a large geographical area in central, rural Montana. Each of our programs partners with a number of service agencies, public, private, and faith-based in order to broaden our efforts.

Child Care Resource and Referrals provides training for child care providers to lead to and retain state licensure and to support statewide quality initiatives. Assistance is also provided for families to receive Best Beginnings scholarships for children to have access to quality child care.

The Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children serves pregnant and post-partum mothers and children up to the age of five, providing nutritional benefits and monitoring wellness and development.

Employment and Training includes both the Work Readiness Component (WoRC) and the Workforce Investment Act – Youth (WIA-Y) programs. Case managers work with families who receive TANF to move into the workforce and with students and area schools to provide services, work experience, and access to training for both in school and out of school youth.

All of the programs work closely together and refer for other needed services both inside and outside this organization.

Serving Fergus, Golden Valley, Judith Basin, Musselshell, Petroleum, and Wheatland counties.

For the six counties that we serve the average poverty rate for children under the age of 18 is 28.16%. 50% of young children in the state of Montana live in families earning less than 200% of the poverty level.

Programs which work to break the poverty cycle begin with parents during the prenatal period and work with the children from birth through graduation and entry into the workforce. A strong system of early intervention and education will provide the foundation needed to help the children achieve the knowledge and skills to stay in school and move into the workforce.

We support Governor Bullock and Superintendent Juneau's application for the *Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge* grant. The grant application would establish a coordinated system of early learning and development to begin with prenatal care. The proposal would prepare children for kindergarten by raising standards for and strengthening early childhood providers. As the Child Care Resource and Referral for the central Montana area, we would partner with the state to support and further these goals.

With increased competition, it is important that all states and communities develop programs which work while using public dollars wisely. Montana has consistently demonstrated this ability. This grant is an opportunity to improve early childhood care and learning systems, especially for children who have the highest needs. Access to preschool for all four year olds could be assured. Training for the early childhood workforce will be strengthened.

We appreciate this opportunity to support Montana's application for the *Race to the Top, Early Learning Challenge* grant. We stand with Governor Bullock and Superintendent Juneau in their request for this grant and we are ready to work as partners to implement and support this plan. Please contact us at 406-535-7488 with questions.

Sincerely,

(b)(6)

(b)(6)

Executive Director

(b)(6)

(b)(6)

Program Manager, CCRR



October 7, 2013

Deborah S. Delisle
Assistant Secretary of Elementary
and Secondary Education
U.S. Department of Education

and

George H. Sheldon
Acting Assistant Secretary for
Children and Families
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

Dear Ms. Delise and Mr. Sheldon,

This letter demonstrates District 7 Human Resources Development Council's (HRDC) commitment and support of the State of Montana's application for the Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge Grant (CFDA #84.412A).

HRDC offers the State of Montana's Best Beginnings scholarship for Big Horn, Carbon, Stillwater, Sweet Grass, and Yellowstone Counties. Following are the statistics from FY12 in those counties:

Big Horn County

- 129 low-income families relied on Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship Program.
- 254 children were on the Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship Program.
- \$436,227 was paid out to Child Care providers through the Best Beginning Child Care Scholarship Program.

Carbon County

- 31 low-income families relied on Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship Program.
- 59 children were on the Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship Program.
- \$93,228 was paid out to Child Care providers through the Best Beginning Child Care Scholarship Program.

Stillwater County

- 20 low-income families relied on Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship Program.
- 39 children were on the Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship Program.
- \$67,973 was paid out to Child Care providers through the Best Beginning Child Care Scholarship Program.

Sweet Grass County

- 5 low-income families relied on Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship Program.

- 9 children were on the Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship Program.
- \$9,120 was paid out to Child Care providers through the Best Beginning Child Care Scholarship Program.

Yellowstone County

- 1,538 low-income families relied on Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship Program.
- 2,556 children were on the Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship Program.
- \$7,236,178 was paid out to Child Care providers through the Best Beginning Child Care Scholarship Program.

Throughout Montana, nearly 37,500 children under the age of 6, with working parents maybe in need of childcare every week. On average, children of working mothers spend an average of 36 hours per week in child care. On May 15, 2013, for the first time in 15 years, HHS proposed revisions to the Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) regulations to promote both safe and quality child care setting for children. This was a good start.

We need a system that prepares children for kindergarten, incorporates and builds on existing program like Head Start, STARS to Quality and Graduation Matters.

In Montana and across the county, too many children are falling behind, often dropping out of high school or graduation without the skills and knowledge required to attend college or enter the workforce. **84,000 people in the state of Montana do not have a High School Diploma or GED.** This affects their ability to obtain a well-paying job, and provide for their families. The evidence is increasingly abundant that trying to address the achievement gap must start before our children enter kindergarten. We know that investing in high quality early learning and development programs and a coordinated system of services for children and families can increase graduation rates and will better prepare our kids to be tomorrow's workforce. Every dollar invested in early childhood programs saves nine dollars down the road.

50% of all young children in Montana live in families earning less than 200% of the federal poverty level. The state has large populations of Native American children, and children with special needs. A high percentage of children enter kindergarten without the skills and abilities they need to succeed.

Though every attempt is made to coordinate early childhood services, many children do not receive the critical health, social development, early learning, and other services that would enable them to develop the skills needed for kindergarten readiness.

An early childhood system that supports children ages 0-8 and their families, including prenatal care is needed. Every Montana child should have access to a safe and accessible, high quality early childhood education that includes developmentally appropriate curricula, knowledgeable and well-trained staff and educators, comprehensive services that support their health, nutrition and social well-being, in an

environment that respects and supports diversity. Young children that are supported are more likely to be prepared for success in K-12 and beyond.

The MT Early Learning Challenge is a system reform initiative that will allow us to achieve that vision by coordinating services for young children and their families across multiple systems, expanding implementation of early learning and development standards and quality practices, enhancing workforce development efforts and ensuring that every child has access to high-quality early learning opportunities throughout the state.

The Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge has afforded Montana the opportunity to strengthen the linkages between and commitment of public and community-based partners in developing a high-quality early learning plan for children in our state. Awarding an Early Learning Challenge grant to Montana would provide the capacity-building resources needed to implement that plan.

We appreciate this opportunity to support Montana's application for the Race to the Top, Early Learning Challenge grant. We stand with Governor Bullock and Superintendent Juneau in their request for this grant and we are ready to work as partners to implement and support this plan. Please contact me at bperzinski@hrdc7.org, or (406) 247-4730 should you have further questions.

Sincerely,

(b)(6)

Senior Director of Program Operations
District 7 Human Resource Development Council
Resource & Referral Network, Child Care Programs

DENNIS & PHYLLIS
WASHINGTON
FOUNDATION

101 International Drive
Post Office Box 16630
Missoula, MT 59808
www.dpwfoundation.org

October 4, 2013

Deborah S. Delisle
Assistant Secretary of Elementary and Secondary Education
U.S. Department of Education

George H. Sheldon
Acting Assistant Secretary for Children and Families
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

RE: Montana Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge CFDA # 84.412A

Dear Assistant Secretary Delisle and Acting Assistant Secretary Sheldon,

It is a pleasure to write this letter of support for the federal grant application, "Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge Competition", submitted by Governor Bullock and School Superintendent Juneau.

Over the past eight years, the Dennis and Phyllis Washington Foundation has made early learning a priority of the foundation. Based on the seminal research and white paper written by Art Rolnick, senior Vice President and Director of Research, Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis in 2003, the Dennis and Phyllis Washington Foundation hosted a statewide Governor's Summit on School Readiness in 2006. The Foundation followed the summit by funding a statewide study of the economic impact of early care and education in Montana and worked with the Montana Chamber of Commerce, Montana Department of Labor and business leaders around the state to disseminate long term benefits from investing in early care and education. The Foundation has also funded numerous early childhood education programs, demonstration and pilot projects to show how early childhood education can have an immediate impact on helping families ensure that their young children show up for school ready to learn. Equally as important, the Foundation has partnered with the State of Montana, Department of Public Health and Human Services to match federal grants that will support the implementation of the statewide Five Stars To Quality program for child care providers in Montana.

The Washington Companies, as a major employer in Montana, have a vested interest in assisting the Governor and Superintendent Juneau in their effort to expand early learning opportunities for young children. As a set of industrial companies requiring skilled and professional employees, we will directly benefit from the investment made in our children. The research is convincing that exposing children and families to a broad range of early childhood programs produces engaged parents, children cognitively, socially and emotionally ready to learn, increased graduation rates from high school and greater college attendance. Equally as important, children exposed to quality early childhood programs are less likely to be involved with our criminal justice or human services systems and are more likely to become homeowners and productive workers throughout their working lives. Early childhood programs are the foundation for a skilled workforce, which is key not only to our companies' success but to our economic growth and competitiveness. We know that workers who possess skills

MAKING AN INVESTMENT IN PEOPLE TO IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF THEIR LIVES.

for success also gain the earning power to buy more goods and services and help drive economic growth. In short, how successfully we address all of our challenges and opportunities – such as revitalizing our economy and competing globally – depends on the quality and depth of our most important resource, our human capital. Here in Montana, quality early learning will ultimately determine whether we can maintain our relatively low unemployment rate, and it impacts our ability as a state to attract young families and good workers. What does early childhood have to do with workforce development? While much attention has rightly focused on improving the education of young people at the K-12 and postsecondary level, it is critically important to establish the foundation for success during a child's first five years. What happens during those early years – whether children have regular access to decent healthcare (including prenatal care for mothers); books in the home that parents read to them; opportunities to develop social and emotional skills, habits such as self-discipline, persistence and cooperation; and early education – largely determines whether they arrive at kindergarten ready to learn or are already far behind.

Children who start kindergarten behind their peers have difficulty catching up quickly. And children who aren't reading at grade level by the end of third grade are four times more likely to drop out before finishing high school. At a time when a high school diploma no longer brings a young person to the finish line for success, but truly only the starting line, those who drop out have little chance of becoming the workers (or consumers) our economy requires, let alone living the productive lives we wish for all our children. By contrast, research shows that disadvantaged children involved in early education perform better in math and English, are much more likely to graduate, are significantly less likely to be arrested as juveniles than peers who don't have this opportunity and are more likely to find and retain jobs, purchase homes and be productive members of our communities. Just as the long-term future of businesses depends on investments in human capital, so does our future as a state and as a nation. It's not rocket science. But it's the way we grow rocket scientists. It's not just the right thing to do. It's the smart one.

The Early Childhood System in Montana Vision Statement and the Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge Executive Summary provide the framework for the necessary ingredients to expand on already existing programs, build capacity and expand access, and particularly for children with high needs. On behalf of the Dennis and Phyllis Washington Foundation, I strongly support approval of this grant.

Sincerely,

(b)(6)

Executive Director

(b)(6)

DENNIS & PHYLLIS
WASHINGTON
FOUNDATION

101 International Drive
Post Office Box 16630
Missoula, MT 59808
www.dpwfoundation.org

October 4, 2013

Deborah S. Delisle
Assistant Secretary of Elementary and Secondary Education
U.S. Department of Education

George H. Sheldon
Acting Assistant Secretary for Children and Families
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

RE: Montana Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge CFDA # 84.412A

Dear Assistant Secretary Delisle and Acting Assistant Secretary Sheldon,

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The Washington Companies, as a major employer in Montana, have a vested interest in assisting the Governor and Superintendent Juneau in their effort to expand early learning opportunities for young children. As a set of industrial companies requiring skilled and professional employees, we will directly benefit from the investment made in our children. The research is convincing that exposing children and families to a broad range of early childhood programs produces engaged parents, children cognitively, socially and emotionally ready to learn, increased graduation rates from high school and greater college attendance. Equally as important, children exposed to quality early childhood programs are less likely to be involved with our criminal justice or human services systems and are more likely to become homeowners and productive workers throughout their working lives. Early childhood programs are the foundation for a skilled workforce, which is key not only to our companies' success but to our economic growth and competitiveness. We know that workers who possess skills

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for success also gain the earning power to buy more goods and services and help drive economic growth. In short, how successfully we address all of our challenges and opportunities – such as revitalizing our economy and competing globally – depends on the quality and depth of our most important resource, our human capital. Here in Montana, quality early learning will ultimately determine whether we can maintain our relatively low unemployment rate, and it impacts our ability as a state to attract young families and good workers. What does early childhood have to do with workforce development? While much attention has rightly focused on improving the education of young people at the K-12 and postsecondary level, it is critically important to establish the foundation for success during a child's first five years. What happens during those early years – whether children have regular access to decent healthcare (including prenatal care for mothers); books in the home that parents read to them; opportunities to develop social and emotional skills, habits such as self-discipline, persistence and cooperation; and early education – largely determines whether they arrive at kindergarten ready to learn or are already far behind.

Children who start kindergarten behind their peers have difficulty catching up quickly. And children who aren't reading at grade level by the end of third grade are four times more likely to drop out before finishing high school. At a time when a high school diploma no longer brings a young person to the finish line for success, but truly only the starting line, those who drop out have little chance of becoming the workers (or consumers) our economy requires, let alone living the productive lives we wish for all our children. By contrast, research shows that disadvantaged children involved in early education perform better in math and English, are much more likely to graduate, are significantly less likely to be arrested as juveniles than peers who don't have this opportunity and are more likely to find and retain jobs, purchase homes and be productive members of our communities. Just as the long-term future of businesses depends on investments in human capital, so does our future as a state and as a nation. It's not rocket science. But it's the way we grow rocket scientists. It's not just the right thing to do. It's the smart one.

The Early Childhood System in Montana Vision Statement and the Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge Executive Summary provide the framework for the necessary ingredients to expand on already existing programs, build capacity and expand access, and particularly for children with high needs. On behalf of the Dennis and Phyllis Washington Foundation, I strongly support approval of this grant.

Sincerely,

(b)(6)

A rectangular box with a black border, used to redact the signature of the Executive Director. The text "(b)(6)" is written in the top left corner of the box.

Executive Director

MH/ta



October 9, 2013

Deborah S. Delisle
Assistant Secretary of Elementary
and Secondary Education
U.S. Department of Education
Services

and

George H. Sheldon
Acting Assistant Secretary for
Children and Families
U.S. Department of Health and Human

Dear Ms. Delise and Mr. Sheldon,

This letter demonstrates commitment and support from the Early Childhood Coalition of the Greater Helena Area for the State of Montana's application for the Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge Grant (CFDA #84.412A).

The Early Childhood Coalition (ECC) is a group of organizations and individuals dedicated to enhancing the health, safety, care and education of families and their children 0-8 years in Lewis and Clark County. The purpose of the RTT-ELC program, to improve the quality of early learning and development programs and close the achievement gap for children with high needs, are identified needs in our local community. The ECC's comprehensive community needs assessment, completed in 2012, identified four main areas of concern in our target population including the following: family support, childcare and early education, social and emotional development, and health. Following this assessment our coalition formulated a five year plan with the following goals: early childhood infrastructure development, promoting investments in early childhood, improving support for high quality early care and education for all, and finally improving access and use of screening, prevention, and early intervention services for families and their children ages 0-8 years.

Montana's application for the Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge Grant aligns with the ECC's five year strategic plan goals, therefore we support the state's application in order to improve early care and learning systems, access and quality to high-needs children, parental support and engagement, systems alignment, early childhood workforce development, appropriate screening and assessment, and data alignment, which are critical for systems change and quality investments in our state. We appreciate this opportunity to support Montana and our Governor and are ready to enhance collaboration efforts to implement and support this plan.

Sincerely,

(b)(6)

Lewis and Clark County Superintendent of Schools
Chair of the Early Childhood Coalition of The Greater Helena Area
Early Childhood Coalition Of The Greater Helena Area
901 N Harris Ave, Helena, MT 59601

October 10, 2013

SUBJECT: Montana's Race to the Top- Early Learning Challenge Grant Application

To Whom It May Concern:

This letter demonstrates our Early Childhood Investment Team's (ECIT) support for the Montana application for the Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge Grant Application (CFDA #84.412A).

ECIT is a local group of individuals and agencies dedicated to investing and supporting early childhood needs in our community. We work to promote healthy growth and development in children by:

- Empowering families to be an active participant throughout their child's life;
- Collaborating with existing agencies;
- Referring to comprehensive supportive services; and
- Advocating for the overall health of young children.

ECIT has worked diligently to complete our Early Childhood Needs Assessment and Strategic Plan. Our initiatives for our community include:

- Promoting early learning & school readiness;
- Promoting high quality home visiting program(s);
- Promoting an integrated referral system for families looking for resources;
- Promoting family self-sufficiency; and
- Advocating for safe and affordable housing for families.

Montana's application helps support our efforts to allow opportunity to improve birth through five early care and learning systems in our community. As well as allowing Montana to take action to assure access for all children in preschool particularly for high-needs children.

We look forward to the opportunity to work as partners to implement and support their plan. Please contact me at (b)(6) with questions.

Sincerely,

(b)(6)

On behalf of the Early Childhood Investment Team (ECIT)



Early Childhood Investment Team



October 8, 2013

Ms. Deborah S. Delisle
Assistant Secretary of Elementary
and Secondary Education
U.S. Department of Education

and

Mr. George H. Sheldon
Acting Assistant Secretary for
Children and Families
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

Dear Ms. Delise and Mr. Sheldon,

This letter is intended to demonstrate Excelligence® Learning Corporation's support for the state of Montana's application for the Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge grant (CFDA #84.412A).

Excelligence® Learning Corporation, doing business as Discount School Supply®, is a leading developer, manufacturer, distributor and retailer of products for child care programs, preschools, elementary schools and families. Based in Monterey, California, we offer a broad array of products designed for classroom and home use, enhanced by its extensive proprietary product development program. Our mission is to help promote children's education, and to support and enrich learning at school and at home by providing educators and parents with safe, top-quality products and resources.

We are glad Montana recognizes that too many children are falling behind—often dropping out of high school or graduating without the skills and knowledge required to attend college or enter the workforce—and that easy access to early education plays a key role to their future success. We offer our support to the state of Montana in its efforts to obtain additional funding for its early childhood programs. This additional funding incorporates and builds on existing programs like Head Start, STARS to Quality and Graduation Matters. Currently, we are actively supporting the STARS to Quality program by extending special offers throughout the year to participating preschool programs. In addition, we provide extensive free resources to teachers to maximize the value of the dollars they spend. For example, we have the only preschool catalog which matches products to standards in math, science, language and social studies to make it easier for teachers to assemble the best materials to help them reach specified educational goals. We also have an ongoing commitment to support Head Starts in Montana, as well as an annual program to benefit the work of the National Head Start Association. We are the only preschool distributor which has created a full-length product catalog matching products to the new Head Start Domains.

We appreciate this opportunity to support Montana's application for the Race to the Top, Early Learning Challenge grant. We stand with Governor Bullock and Superintendent Juneau in their request for this grant and we are ready to work as partners to implement and support this plan. Please feel free to contact me with any questions.

Sincerely,

(b)(6)

(b)
(6)

Marketing Research and Development
Excelligence Learning Corporation

(b)(6)



October 3, 2013

Deborah S. Delisle
Assistant Secretary of Elementary
and Secondary Education
U.S. Department of Education

and

George H. Sheldon
Acting Assistant Secretary for
Children and Families
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

Dear Ms. Delise and Mr. Sheldon,

This letter demonstrates Family Connections MT's commitment and support of the State of Montana's application for the Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge Grant (CFDA #84.412A).

Family Connections MT is a Child Care Resource and Referral Agency providing both statewide services as well as Great Falls Regional services. We are the proud host of two centralized statewide services in the Best Beginnings Child Care Referral Program and Legally Certified Provider (Family, Friend, and Neighbor Care) processing. We also provide child care scholarship services and child care provider professional development for our six county region including the Blackfeet Reservation.

Family Connections MT is extremely committed and involved with early childhood systems at the state and local levels. Not only do we offer services statewide to families and child care providers, but we also are a part of the MTCCRR State Network, participate in state and local early childhood coalitions and task forces. We are on the board for the Great Falls Early Childhood Coalition, are members of the Great Falls Chapter of MTAEYC, and work with the local Day Care Association. We served and provided leadership with MECAC which is now the Best Beginnings Advisory Council. We have served on statewide work groups and task forces to provide statewide collaboration on scholarship, referral, and provider services processes.

Family Connections MT's services are integral in the lives of children, families and our early childhood system. We provide child care scholarships to families based on income. We provide child care referrals for families and consumer education to help them choose the right provider for their child. We provide professional development to improve the quality of child care for all children regardless of income. We process Legally Certified Provider applications so that parents on the child care scholarship can utilize a safe provider of their choice.

Family Connections MT unequivocally supports Montana's application for the Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge Grant. We are committed to the vision of early childhood that prepares young children to be kindergarten-ready by supporting children, families and those providing care to young

children. We are extremely excited about the plans and vision that Governor Bullock and Superintendent Juneau have for early childhood in our state. We are committed to partnering in the effort to improve our graduation rates and the skills of workers entering college or the workforce. We agree with the mounting research and evidence that addressing the achievement gap must begin before children enter kindergarten. By investing in high quality early childhood programs, the return on investment will garner children better prepared for school, college and the workforce. This investment will mean increased home ownership for these children as adults, increased earnings, reduced involvement in criminal justice system or other risk behaviors that impact their future. Also for every dollar invested in early childhood, there is a return of \$9 which in our state and rural communities, that is a huge investment and impact.

We are excited about the plans to invest in kindergarten-ready children and the expansion of services for children and families. Family Connections MT supports the plan to raise the standards for early childhood providers, building on and improving existing programs like Head Start, STARS to Quality and Graduation Matters. We believe in the increasing wrap around services for families as well as strengthening, investing in and promoting the early childhood workforce. With a higher quality system, we improve the quality of the programs working with young children and young children are given high quality experiences.

Family Connections MT is confident that the plans to invest in early childhood will positively impact the families and providers we work with every day. We are committed to working to implement these plans and partner with others to improve services to families and providers. Family Connections MT is excited about the increase to STARS program and our role providing coaching within this work. We are excited about the increase in quality of early childhood programs and investment in the workforce as this will lead Montana to higher quality care for all children. We are committed to providing services to families that increase and value parent partnership through the referral and child care scholarship programs.

Family Connections MT is passionate about the early childhood work in Montana. We believe that this is an unprecedented opportunity for Montana to improve birth through five early care and learning systems, as well as to further increase access and quality to high-needs children. We fully support the opportunities and improvements that a successful grant application would mean to support Montana's children, families, and those who also care for them.

We appreciate this opportunity to support Montana's application for the Race to the Top, Early Learning Challenge grant. We stand with Governor Bullock and Superintendent Juneau in their request for this grant and we are ready to work as partners to implement and support this plan. Please feel free to contact me at (b)(6) or (b)(6) with questions.

Sincerely,

(b)(6)

Executive Director

Flathead Best Beginnings Community Council

146 Third Avenue West | Kalispell, MT 59901 | PH: 406-756-1414 | FX: 406-751-1410

October 8, 2013

Deborah S. Delisle
Assistant Secretary of Elementary
and Secondary Education
U.S. Department of Education

and

George H. Sheldon
Acting Assistant Secretary for Children and Families
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

Dear Ms. Delise and Mr. Sheldon,

This letter demonstrates the Flathead Best Beginnings Community Council (FBBCC) commitment and support of the State of Montana's application for the Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge Grant (CFDA #84.412A).

The FBBCC has worked diligently in the past two years to build an inclusive council that can begin to address the many needs of young children and families in Flathead County in a collaborative way. Helping children and families be ready for not only school, but life as well, has been part of many discussions. One piece of ensuring that this happens is developing more systematic methods of connecting families to the schools BEFORE they enter Kindergarten and improving the communication between early childhood professionals and school districts for those children under the age of 5 being cared for outside the home. Our Council has worked with intention on developing connections between local school districts and the many organizations that work with young children and families. All see and feel the need to be better prepared to broaden the scope of services they offer to more adequately meet the needs of increasingly needy children and families. Fifty percent of all young children in Montana live in families earning less than 200% of the federal poverty level. Many of those children live in Flathead County, which still struggles with the impact of the recession. The Early Learning Challenge Grant offers an unprecedented opportunity to develop meaningful systems changes and make quality investments in early childhood education to enable these children and families to not only be "ready for school" but to have schools be "ready for children."

Helping to improve the coordination of services that address physical and mental health, social development, early learning, and healthy living environments will improve children's outcomes in the future. A comprehensive system that also addresses parent engagement and early childhood workforce development will truly change our young children's lives. We appreciate this opportunity to support Montana's application for the Race to the Top, Early Learning Challenge grant. We stand with Governor Bullock and Superintendent Juneau in their request for this grant and we are ready to work as partners to implement and support this plan.

Sincerely,

(b)(6)

Community Health Director
Flathead City-County Health
Department

(b)(6)

Director
Child Development Center

(b)(6)

Director
Discovery Developmental Center

(b)(6)

Executive Director
Northwest Montana
Head Start

(b)(6)

Executive Director
United Way

(b)(6)

Executive Director
The Nurturing Center



October 9, 2013

Re: Letter of Support
Race to the Top - Montana's Early Learning Challenge

Florence Crittenton is pleased to offer this letter of support to the State of Montana, Governor Steve Bullock, Superintendent Denise Juneau and the Children's Mental Health Bureau in applying for the Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge. Florence Crittenton passionately believes a focused, unified approach to services for children ages birth to five is critical if we are to address the effects of adverse childhood experiences and provide families with healthy starts.

Montana has repeatedly responded to a growing need for quality services for children and families by supporting programs such as Florence Crittenton that offer intensive services to high risk families and their children through residential and community based programs. Building capacity and improving upon these programs is crucial if we are to create a well-coordinated system for addressing the needs of these children and families who are most critically at risk. The Governor and Superintendent have recognized the need for early intervention to create healthy futures for Montanans and have swiftly taken action to seek out opportunities for supporting families.

I encourage you to consider Montana's application for the Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge. In over a century of serving high risk families we have seen first-hand the severity of needs in our families with children under 3, particularly those in rural communities. These needs continue to go unaddressed largely due to a lack of capacity. This opportunity could provide Montana with support necessary to create a system of high quality programs that will improve the future of our state.

Sincerely,

(b)(6)

Executive Director

changing the future ... two lives at a time



Box 398, Poplar, MT 59255
Administration (406) 768-6300
Fax (406) 768-6301
[www. fpcc.edu](http://www.fpcc.edu)

Deborah S. Delisle
Assistant Secretary of Elementary and Secondary Education
U.S. Department of Education

and

George H. Sheldon
Acting Assistant Secretary for Children and Families
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

RE: Montana Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge CFDA # 84.412A

Dear Assistant Secretary Delisle and Acting Assistant Secretary Sheldon,

On behalf of the Fort Peck Community College, I President Dr. Florence Garcia support Governor Steve Bullock and Superintendent Denise Juneau's application to the Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge.

In Montana and especially in Indian Country, many children are dropping out of high school or graduating without the skills and knowledge required attending college or entering the workforce. To address this, we must focus or begin before our children enter kindergarten. Investing in early learning and child development programs will prepare our kids to be ready for the workforce. Our children are our future and this is why we are supporting this application.

Fort Peck Community College (FPCC) is located in rural northeastern Montana on the Fort Peck Indian Reservation. FPCC is a great pathway for our high school graduates to attain a degree or transfer to a four year University. FPCC focuses on student success through degree and career attainment. The Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge grant would support the goal of all students succeeding.

We believe this is an important partnership between the State of Montana and the Tribal Nations to encourage success through education.

(b)(6)

President
Fort Peck Community College

FORT PECK TRIBES

Assiniboine & Sioux

October 4, 2013

Deborah S. Delisle
Assistant Secretary of Elementary and Secondary Education
U.S. Department of Education

and

George H. Sheldon
Acting Assistant Secretary for Children and Families
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

RE: Montana Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge CFDA # 84.412A

Dear Assistant Secretary Delisle and Acting Assistant Secretary Sheldon,

On behalf of the Fort Peck Tribes, I Chairman Floyd G. Azure support Governor Steve Bullock and Superintendent Denise Juneau's application to the Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge.

In Montana and especially in Indian Country, many children are dropping out of high school or graduating without the skills and knowledge required attending college or entering the workforce. To address this, we must focus and begin before our children enter kindergarten. Investing in early learning and child development programs will prepare our kids to be ready for the workforce. Our children are our future and this is why we are supporting this application.

We believe this is an important partnership between the State of Montana and the Tribal Nations to encourage success

Sincerely,

(b)(6)

Chairman



LAURA MCKEE

Chair, Family Support Services Advisory Council

Deborah S. Delisle and
Assistant Secretary of Education
And Secondary Education
U.S. Department of Education

George Sheldon
Acting Assistant Secretary for
Children and Families
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

Re: Montana Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge CFDA #84.412A

As Chair of the Family Support Services Advisory Council (FSSAC) and parent of a child with a disability, I extend the Council's support of Montana's Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge application. The Council's role as Montana's interagency coordinating council is to advise and assist the Part C Family Education and Support program to plan, develop, and implement Montana's comprehensive, multi-disciplinary, coordinated program of early intervention and family support services for children, aged birth to five, with disabilities and their families.

The Council will participate in any planning and assist with implementation of the State's effort to promote high quality early learning and development programs and coordinated systems for our children. We believe input and engagement from families along with State officials and community members is crucial to offer our children a brighter future. The Council is committed to promoting the vision of an early childhood system supporting all children and their families throughout Montana.

Sincerely,

Laura McKee, Parent Chair
2615 4th Avenue S
Billings, MT 59101

Beth Brewer
Full Circle Mental Health Center
1903 S. Russell St.
Missoula, Mt, 59801-6603

Deborah S. Delisle
Assistant Secretary of Elementary and Secondary education
US Department of Education

George H. Sheldon
Acting Assistant Secretary for Children and Families
U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services

RE: Montana Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge CFDA # 84.412A

Dear Ms. Delisle and Mr. Sheldon

I am writing to express Full Circle Mental Health Center's support of the Montana Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge. Montana is a state in which agencies do provide some services for young children, but frequently, children who are eligible for these services do not receive care because families do not understand the services that are available. Additionally, at times, children with high needs are not identified in screenings. These children continue to struggle throughout their childhood to catch up to their peers developmentally. Montana Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge would help mitigate these accessibility and eligibility issues. Agencies need to work together to ensure families understand the services that are available to their children and the Montana Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge would help facilitate this. Families need to know screenings are available for their children and assessors need the most updated information and assessments to ensure children are assessed for developmental differences early and accurately; the Montana Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge would aid in this effort.

Full Circle Mental Health provides services for young children through our preschool and Head Start mental health programs. Our family based services work to support young children in their homes and communities by providing services to those who have experienced abuse, neglect, are diagnosed with autism spectrum disorders, and/or who are struggling with other mental health diagnosis. We provide education and support to parents and direct skill building to children in their homes. Full Circle provides assessment services as well in two regions of the state of Montana. We are eager to collaborate with other agencies to increase the opportunities for early intervention in our state. Full Circle looks forward to working as a team with community partners to maintain children in their homes and build necessary developmental and social-emotional skills in young children.

Full Circle is eager to participate in statewide counsels to bolster this effort. We would gladly help train other participants in best practice approaches to early intervention. Full Circle will continue to provide services for families using Medicaid funds while integrating and utilizing the

services and strategies made available through the Montana Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge.

Thank you for your efforts in supporting the growth and development of young children in the state of Montana!

Sincerely:

(b)(6)

Manager of Family Based and Developmental Services
Full Circle Mental Health Center



8 October 2013

Deborah S. Delisle
Assistant Secretary of Elementary
and Secondary Education
U.S. Department of Education

and

George H. Sheldon
Acting Assistant Secretary for
Children and Families
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

Dear Ms. Delise and Mr. Sheldon,

This letter demonstrates the Early Childhood Coalition commitment and support of the State of Montana's application for the Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge Grant (CFDA #84.412A).

- The Great Falls Early Childhood Coalitions' vision is that all families and children in our community have the building blocks for success.
 - We coordinate various local health and educational agencies serving populations, ages prenatal to six.
 - The application perfectly fits what we as a coalition do on a local level.
 - We have been active since 2006, working as a coalition in our community and are presently incorporated in the state of Montana as a public benefit non-profit corporation.
 - It would make available funding to promote further cooperation and coordination of existing services and to continue some of our projects providing services especially to high needs children.
-
- We definitely need to coordinate existing services to children and all pull in the same direction to maximize available funds and services for young children and their families. This grant can help the state of Montana to further such a goal.
 - We appreciate this opportunity to support Montana's application for the Race to the Top, Early Learning Challenge grant. We stand with Governor Bullock and Superintendent Juneau in their request for this grant and we are ready to work as partners to implement and support this plan.

Please contact us with any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

Judith Flint-ECC Community Coordinator 801-678-3861/Judith_flint@gfps.k12.mt.us

Andree Deligdisch-ECC Board Member andreedeligdisch@gmail.com

Jo-Viviane Jones-ECC Board Member 406-791-9262/jjones@cascadecountymt.gov



Early Childhood Community Council
Gallatin County, Montana
(406) 587-2194
eccc@greatergallatinunitedway.org

October 11, 2013

Deborah S. Delisle
Assistant Secretary of Elementary
and Secondary Education
U.S. Department of Education

and

George H. Sheldon
Acting Assistant Secretary for
Children and Families
U.S. Department of Health and
Human Services

Dear Ms. Delise and Mr. Sheldon,

This letter demonstrates the Greater Gallatin Early Childhood Community Council's commitment and support of the State of Montana's application for the Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge Grant (CFDA #84.412A).

The Early Childhood Community Council (ECCC) is made up of community leaders in Gallatin County who are working together to support ***children ready for life and learning***. The council recognizes that if we want greater school success and a skilled workforce, we need to ensure the proper development of all our children at these earliest ages. Our work is a community-wide effort. We believe that by working closely with community members in the Gallatin area and around Montana to identify needs, build partnerships, and strengthen services, more children will be ready for success in school and in life.

ECCC consists of a leadership council and a program committee convened by the Greater Gallatin United Way together with a coordinator dedicated specifically to the mission. The council brings all the *major* players to work as a team. The group recently completed an area needs assessment that lead to a Community Resource Guide and a strategic plan with both long term and short term goals to improve the lives of children in our community.

The Gallatin Valley ECCC along with other regional early childhood councils in Montana developed a system of communication and collaboration that built the infrastructure to successfully implement the Race to the Top (RTT) grant.

Montana is one of only 10 states that does not offer access to preschool for all four-year-olds. The State needs to improve access to affordable quality programs, particularly for high-needs

children. In addition, the state ranks 50th in overall child health. RTT will allow each community to focus on the critical issues of early childhood. This is an unprecedented opportunity for Montana to improve birth through five early care and learning systems, as well as to expand access and quality to high-needs children. The RTT grant will allow our Council to expand services and fill the gaps identified in the needs assessment most of which directly align with the mission of RTT.

We appreciate this opportunity to support Montana's application for the Race to the Top, Early Learning Challenge grant. We stand with Governor Bullock and Superintendent Juneau in their request for this grant and we are ready to work as partners to implement and support this plan.

Please contact me at (b)(6) or (b)(6) with questions.

Sincerely,

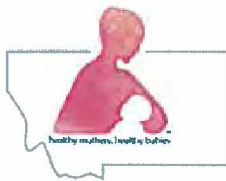
(b)(6)

ECCC Council Chair
CEO Greater Gallatin United Way

ECCC Leadership Council member

(b)(6)

Mission: The Early Childhood Stakeholders have a commitment to young children and their families. The team serves to bring community leaders together to dialogue, plan, strategize and collaborate to create an agenda that supports healthy early childhood growth and development. We provide leadership to develop a community wide action plan to improve conditions for young children and families in the Greater Gallatin area.



(b)(6) **Healthy Babies**
The Montana Coalition
 (b)(6)
Executive Director

400 North Park Avenue
 Helena, MT 59601

(b)(6)

www.hmhb-mt.org

October 9, 2013

Deborah S. Delisle
 Assistant Secretary of Elementary
 and Secondary Education
 U.S. Department of Education

and

George H. Sheldon
 Acting Assistant Secretary for
 Children and Families
 U.S. Department of Health and
 Human Services

HMHB-MT Board

President

(b)(6)

Dear Ms. Delise and Mr. Sheldon,

This letter demonstrates Healthy Mothers, Healthy Babies-The Montana Coalition commitment and support of the State of Montana's application for the Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge Grant (CFDA #84.412A).

We are proud to support the Governor's vision of an early childhood system that prepares children to be kindergarten-ready by supporting children ages 0-8 and their families, including prenatal care.

Healthy Mothers, Healthy Babies-MT ensures that no Montana babies zero to three are in jeopardy and instead are welcome, safe, healthy, and treasured. And as the only statewide nonprofit with a focus on the zero to three population we know that investing in high quality early learning and development programs and a coordinated system of services for children and families will increase graduation rates and better prepare our kids to be tomorrow's workforce.

For nearly three decades, HMHB-MT has provided services, advocacy and leadership to improve the health, safety and well-being of Montana's children, families and communities through prevention, education, training, and monitoring health and health-related services.

We appreciate this opportunity to support Montana's application for the Race to the Top, Early Learning Challenge grant. We stand with Governor Bullock and Superintendent Juneau in their request for this grant and we are ready to work as partners to implement and support this plan. Please contact me at (406)449-8611 or

(b)(6)

Sincerely,

(b)(6)

Executive Director

Executive Director

(b)(6)

Healthy Mothers, Healthy Babies ensures that no Montana babies zero to three are in jeopardy, and instead are welcome, safe, healthy and, treasured!



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October 08, 2013

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Deborah S. Delisle and
Assistant Secretary of Elementary
And Secondary Education
U.S. Department of Education

George H. Sheldon
Acting Assistant Secretary for
Children and Families
U. S Department of Health and Human Services

Dear Ms Delisle and Mr. Sheldon,

This letter demonstrates the Hi-Line Home Programs, Inc. commitment and support of the State of Montana's application for the Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge Grant (CFDA #84.412A).

Hi-Line Home Programs is a Not for Profit Corporation that contracts with the State of Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services to provide a variety of Home Based Intervention Programs in of Eastern Montana. The very rural area that we provide supports in is characterized by three main elements, 1.) a very rural culture that has been primarily supported by agriculture, 2.) the Fort Peck Tribal Reservation that is traditionally home to the Assiniboine and Sioux tribes, 3.) and most recently the impact of the boom type of economy that has been thrust upon us by the development of natural resources in the Bakken Oil Field formation.

Our Corporation provides the following services and supports:

- supports for families that have children that are identified with Developmental Delays,
- we provide the Child Care Resource and Referral Services to support both families who are seeking child care and the care providers that have direct contact with the children of our area,
- we also are involved with a program that is designed to either prevent the placement of children into a foster care setting or are being returned to their natural homes,
- we administer the Child and Adult Care Food Program for this region,
- and most recently we have started a program to support the transition of individuals from the State foster care system as they reach the age of majority.

MALTA, MT
406-263-7015

MILES CITY, MT
406-234-0193

PLENTYWOOD, MT
PO BOX 26
1-800-322-4175
406-765-1282
FAX: 406-765-1280

SIDNEY, MT
PO BOX 349
1-800-628-8618
406-433-6061
FAX: 406-433-7429

WOLF POINT, MT
226 3rd Ave. S.
406-653-1229
FAX: 406-653-1231
1-800-488-0688

Our Corporation has been in existence since 1976. During this time we have developed collaborative relationships with the support systems that work with families and children in this area. We have endeavored to work with established systems to prevent duplication of services while making the best use of the resources that are available in the area.

Some examples are:

- Collaborating with the Comprehensive System of Personal Development to bring quality trainings related to Early Care and Education to professionals serving families in the region.
- We have been able to coop with School Districts in providing child find activities to insure early identification of children that have special needs.
- We are members of Advisory groups for both the local and tribal Head Start Programs.
- We are able to work with the local communities in providing support for Parenting Activities and trainings.
- We work closely with both the local and tribal public health systems to identify needs and attempt to support families with needs that are related to their young children.

During our tenure as an agency we have been involved with many State wide groups to advocate for the development of supports for families who live in an isolated geographic area. Recently these activities have taken on a much more urgent tenor as families have moved into the area and are either homeless or living in substandard housing conditions, to the point of residing in homes that have dirt floors.

We see the availability of funding that could be provided through an Early Learning Grant such as this as a boon to this area. The vast majority of the populations that we serve are below the Federal Poverty guidelines. Their ability to access services is compounded by the remoteness and lack of professionals in the areas. An example is for a family to have a visit to a Pediatrician generally means a round trip of no less than 300 miles.

We appreciate the opportunity to support Montana's application for the Race to the Top, Early Challenge grant. We stand with Governor Bullock and Superintendent Juneau in this request for the grant. We are ready and willing to work them and support them as partners in the implementation of this grant and will continue to be advocates for children and families in our area.

Sincerely,

(b)(6)

October 9, 2013



Deborah S. Delisle
Assistant Secretary of Elementary and Secondary Education
U.S. Department of Education

George H. Sheldon
Acting Assistant Secretary for Children and Families
U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services

Dear Ms. Delisle and Mr. Sheldon,

I am writing you in support of the State of Montana's grant application for the **Montana Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge CFDA # 84.412A**.

Intermountain is a provider of a variety of services to children and families in Montana for over one hundred years. Services to children and their families Intermountain provides range from Residential to Community Services with a focus on treatment and child welfare. In 2012, Intermountain served over 1000 children in communities ranging from Helena, Great Falls, Missoula, and Kalispell. We are best known for our nationally recognized treatment model and approach we call our "Developmental-Relational Model" which focuses on relationships and viewing the child through their developmental age. Our model emphasizes the importance of the first three years of life and how a child is parented and cared for in these first three years will impact their growth and success in later life.

Intermountain strongly believes that we have to *understand that there have not been short-term answers that have produced long-term changes for children and families. We are dealing with long-term needs that defy short-term solutions and interventions.* It pays to invest early and also understand that you can't just find a short term solution for many of the issues. If you are to invest dollars towards the issue of childhood trauma and children's mental health, this would be the wisest place to invest. Based on brain development, early intervention is where we can have the greatest impact and mitigate trauma from occurring. That being said, these are some of the barriers we experience:

- Poverty, hunger, homelessness, unemployment, lack of health care
- Prevention dollars are always the first to be cut.
- Lack of innovative approaches or improvement of services due to no accountability for outcomes. Included in this is poor reimbursement rates for mental health services in general.
- Lack of integration between agencies that deal with children and mental health issues
- Lack of inclusion and involvement from providers (contractors providing services for States), families/children, and advocates in potential solutions.
- Data often only tells part of the story-lack of data to create true outcomes with

3240 Dredge Dr. · Helena, MT 59602
Office: (406) 442-7920 · (800) 200-9112 · Fax: (406) 442-7949

www.intermountain.org

Our organization has worked over the years to seek to impact and change our system of care and introduced legislation and supported legislation to get more funding to support early intervention and services to seek to mitigate the need for more costly services later. Most recently we actively worked with the Child and Family Services Interim Committee on a Childhood Trauma Study. The results coming out of this study and committee were disappointing to say the least. This grant opportunity for Montana actually addresses most of what we were hoping to gain out of the study regarding early childhood and the need for intervention, support, and services.

There are many barriers with our system and it is too large of a problem to address by a few providers or one state system. This grant would allow us to truly tackle the barriers to this issue and create a system that will impact changes that can also be tracked closely for outcomes. Intermountain would work in partnership with the State of Montana and other system providers, advocates and families to work to achieve the vision of this grant in our communities. We have hoped for many years to be able to intervene early and prevent trauma and the need for mental health services. We are poised with our knowledge and skills as an organization to actively support this process and also provide potential mental health and child welfare services that are needed as a result of the work done to create a more integrated system for early childhood. We have experience partnering successfully with the State of Montana DPHHS and OPI on other projects and I know together we can be successful with this opportunity for our youngest Montanans.

Please support Montana is being able to come together and create a better system and support for children and families.

Sincerely,

(b)(6)

Intermountain
3240 Dredge
Helena, MT 59601



10/9/13

To: Deborah S. Delisle and George H. Sheldon
Assistant Secretary of Elementary Acting Assistant Secretary for
and Secondary Education Children and Families
U.S. Department of Education U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services

RE: Montana Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge CFDA # 84.412A

Ms. Delisle and Mr. Sheldon,

As President of the O.P. and W.E. Edwards Foundation and as an individual philanthropist, I would like to lend my support for the Montana submission to the Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge. Montana presents a unique opportunity to incorporate a cohesive, culturally based approach to addressing improvements for Native children on our reservations.

Montana is a leader in its outreach to Native communities and in its approach to diversity. Our state constitution mandates "Indian Education for All" so that all state education includes an appreciation of the Native culture in our history and as a current asset. Montana has more Native representation in state government than almost any other state. Consequently, there are state programs that specifically address the development of educated, Native youth leadership (Schools of Promise and Graduation Matters).

Several initiatives are growing the community capacity within reservations. The Best Beginnings Councils on each reservation are coordinating all existing services and organizations to provide children with seamless support systems from birth through their entire schooling. The Northern Cheyenne Nation received the only Promise Neighborhood planning grant for a tribal community. They have successfully completed a remarkable survey of all segments of their community to determine the goals and aspirations of children, former students now out in the world, grandparents and trusted elders. The enthusiasm and hope shown by the responses was amazing. Although they did not receive an implementation grant,

The O.P. and W.E. Edwards Foundation | PO Box 2445 | Red Lodge, MT 59068

406-446-1077 | 406-446-1363 fax | info@opweedwards.org | opweedwards.org

they are determined to move forward with existing resources to improve the lives of their children.

Several local and regional foundations have been working on improving the funding to Indian Country. Less than 0.5% of all foundation dollars go to addressing the needs of our First Peoples. Through the leadership of the Northwest Area Foundation and several Montana foundations, we have held two intense retreats for Native non-profit leaders and elders and foundation representatives to develop mutual understandings of cultural values emphasizing reciprocity. We are following up with annual convenings, site visits to reservations and capacity building for Native non-profits. Strong relationships are developing and the funds are beginning to flow. This improved infrastructure in Montana Indian Country can only enhance programs within the Early Learning Challenge and make them more effective and responsive to cultural and community needs.

Our foundation and my husband (a Sioux from the Fort Peck Reservation in Northeast Montana) and I, personally, have had the distinct honor to be involved in many of these initiatives in Indian Country. Our donor-advised fund at the Montana Community Foundation is targeted to Native programs. The O.P. and W.E. Edwards Foundation partnered with the First Interstate Bank Foundation to sponsor the Promise Neighborhood program on the Northern Cheyenne Reservation (through their Boys and Girls Club) and are continuing to provide some funds to coordinate its continuation.

As we race to the top for our youngest citizens, Montana has the base to deliver opportunities to ALL its children, especially those Native children who need them the most.

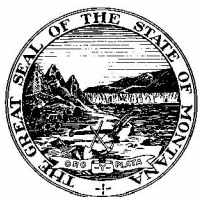
Please feel free to contact me with any questions. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

(b)(6)

The O.P. and W.E. Edwards Foundation | PO Box 2445 | Red Lodge, MT 59068

406-446-1077 | 406-446-1363 fax | info@opweedwards.org | opweedwards.org



MONTANA UNIVERSITY SYSTEM

October 10, 2013

Deborah S. Delisle
Assistant Secretary of Elementary and Secondary Education
U.S. Department of Education

and

George H. Sheldon
Acting Assistant Secretary for Children and Families
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

Re: Montana Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge, CFDA #84.412A

Dear Assistant Secretary Delisle and Acting Secretary Sheldon:

Please accept this letter on behalf of the two Presidents of the Montana University System in strong support of Montana's application to the Race to the Top - Early Learning Challenge Grant (CFDA #84.412A). The eleven campuses of the Montana University System share a commitment to meeting workforce needs, providing certificate through graduate education for early childhood educators, and to articulate clear educational pathways to build Montana's capacity to meet the clear need for early childhood educators.

Montana's two-year colleges collaborate to provide early childhood certificate- and associate-level coursework in at least ten communities. Additional online opportunities exist for rural students to pursue coursework. All coursework, whenever or however offered, is carefully designed to articulate to Montana's four-year degree programs in early childhood. Montana's four-year universities offer Bachelor of Arts degree in Early Childhood Education Montana State University-Bozeman, and the University of Montana Western.

Montana's early childhood programs meet national standards established by the National Association for the Education of Young Children and the state's higher education institutions are engaged in statewide collaborations to ensure that Montana's children and families are well served.

As the leaders of Montana's University System, we offer our full support to the proposed Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge program application for the State of Montana.

Sincerely,

(b)(6)

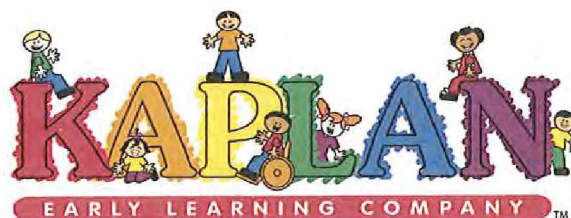
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President, Montana State University

(b)(6)

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President, The University of Montana



October 4, 2013

Deborah S. Delisle
Assistant Secretary of Elementary
and Secondary Education
U.S. Department of Education
Services

and

George H. Sheldon
Acting Assistant Secretary for
Children and Families
U.S. Department of Health and Human

Dear Ms. Delise and Mr. Sheldon,

This letter demonstrates Kaplan Early Learning Company's commitment and support of the State of Montana's application for the Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge Grant (CFDA #84.412A).

Kaplan Early Learning Company has been a market leader in the early childhood education arena for over 45 years. We have seen successful major early childhood initiatives funded by Race To the Top grants in such states as Massachusetts, North Carolina, and California. These programs focused on educational and social development of Pre-K children. While states may differ in their approach, all states believed in the inherent value of providing early learning opportunities and classrooms for young children. Early childhood education reaps such benefits as:

- Readiness for kindergarten
- Improved literacy, math, and reading skills
- Early assessment of special needs or social skills
- Increased parental involvement in their child's education
- Development of social skills

We appreciate this opportunity to support Montana's application for the Race to the Top, Early Learning Challenge grant. We stand with Governor Bullock and Superintendent Juneau in their request for this grant and we are ready to work as partners to implement and support this plan. Please contact me at 800-334-2014 with questions.

Sincerely,

(b)(6)

Territory Manager



October 4, 2013

Deborah S. Delisle, Assistant Secretary for the Office of Elementary and Secondary Education
U.S. Department of Education
400 Maryland Ave., SW
Washington, DC 20202

George Sheldon, Acting Assistant Secretary for the Administration of Children and Families
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Ave., SW
Washington, DC 20201

Dear Assistant Secretary Delisle and Assistant Secretary Sheldon,

Lakeshore Learning Materials is pleased to support Montana's application for the Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge Grant (CFDA #84.412A). Funding from the RTT-ELC grant will give the state of Montana an unprecedented opportunity to improve early childhood education and increase access to education for high-needs children. We believe that the state of Montana has created a comprehensive plan to ensure that children enter kindergarten ready to succeed.

Lakeshore knows that quality early childhood programs and the development of literacy skills early in life are essential to ensuring children's future success—both in and out of the classroom. Research shows that early gains in school-readiness skills translate to increased academic achievement later in life, as well as economic improvement for children born into low-income families. We feel that Montana's ambitious yet achievable plan targets key areas for children's success—including providing quality education, health, nutrition & social services for *all* children and their families, aligning early childhood goals to elementary standards and providing ongoing professional development for teachers.

Lakeshore is a leading manufacturer of high-quality educational materials for early childhood organizations and elementary programs around the country. Through our partnerships with nonprofit organizations, as well as our own research and development, we've created products that boost early brain development, help children reach developmental milestones and build school-readiness skills.

The RTT-ELC grant provides a unique opportunity for the children of Montana, and the goals of the grant closely align with Montana's current goals and objectives for children's health, education and economic development. We stand with Governor Bullock and Superintendent Juneau in their request for funding, and we are committed to working in partnership with them to implement and support their plan.

Sincerely, (b)(6)

(b)(6)

Regional Vice President
Lakeshore Learning Materials

(b)(6)

(b)(6)

2695 E. Dominguez St. • Carson, CA 90895 • LakeshoreLearning.com



October 9, 2013

Deborah S. Delisle
Assistant Secretary of Elementary and Secondary Education
U.S. Department of Education

George H. Sheldon
Acting Assistant Secretary for Children and Families
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

RE: Montana Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge CFDA # 84.412A

Dear Assistant Secretary Delisle and Acting Assistant Secretary Sheldon,

It is with pleasure that we write this letter of support for the federal grant application, Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge Competition, submitted by Montana Governor Steve Bullock and State School Superintendent Denise Juneau.

As co-chairs of Governor Bullock's Main Street Montana Project, a "bottom up" effort to engage people across Montana in a dialogue about workforce development, job creation and growing Montana's economy, we've been tasked with developing a blueprint for a statewide economic development plan. In doing so, we have reached out to over 3,000 Montanans and have learned that our primary challenge to compete in a global economy depends on the strength and vibrancy of our education system.

While much attention has rightly focused on improving the education of young people at the K-12 and postsecondary level, it is critically important to establish the foundation for early childhood development.

We know that workers who possess skills for success are critical to drive economic growth. Successfully addressing all of our challenges and opportunities – such as revitalizing our Montana economy and competing globally – depends on the quality and depth of our most important resource, our human capital.

The Early Childhood System in Montana Vision Statement and the Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge Executive Summary provide the framework for the necessary ingredients to expand on already existing programs, build capacity and expand access, particularly for children with high needs. On behalf of the Main Street Montana Project, we strongly support approval of this grant.

Sincerely,

(b)(6)

Chairman, CEO, D.A. Davidson & Co.

(b)(6)

CEO, The Washington Companies



October 14, 2013

Deborah S. Delisle
Assistant Secretary of Elementary
and Secondary Education
U.S. Department of Education

and

George H. Sheldon
Acting Assistant Secretary for
Children and Families
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

Dear Ms. Delisle and Mr. Sheldon,

This letter demonstrates MEA-MFT's commitment and support of the State of Montana's application for the Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge Grant (CFDA #84.412A).

MEA-MFT is the largest union in Montana. We represent most of the professionals who are on the frontline of providing education and services to Montana children. We represent Montana k-12 teachers and staff, Montana Head Start teachers and staff, Montana University System faculty, and Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services employees.

MEA-MFT advocates for free, quality public education for all Montanans. MEA-MFT advocates for professional salaries and benefits for our members. MEA-MFT supports professional standards through proper licensure and endorsement as well as quality professional development. MEA-MFT supports a prepared, educated, empowered, productive and culturally diverse workforce. We see this grant as an important step towards all of the above goals.

This grant provides a unique opportunity for Montana to improve birth through five early care and learning systems, as well as to further increase access and quality to high-needs children. Parent and community engagement, systems alignment, early childhood workforce development, appropriate and validated screening and assessment, and data alignment are critical for meaningful systems change and quality investments in our state. We are especially excited about the potential for this grant to assist Montana's Head Starts and constitutionally empowered locally controlled public schools to collaborate in providing high quality, public preschool education in partnership with the Montana Office of Public Instruction.

We appreciate this opportunity to support Montana's application for the Race to the Top, Early Learning Challenge grant. We stand with Governor Bullock and Superintendent Juneau in their request for this grant and we are ready to work as partners to implement and support this plan.

(Continued)

- Public Schools ■ Higher Education
- State, County, Municipal Employees
- Head Start ■ Health Care

Working for Montana's Future

1232 East Sixth Ave, Helena, MT 59601 ■

TEL 406.442.4250 or 800.398.0826 FAX 406.443.5081 www.mea-mft.org

However, to remain true to our state's constitution, history, and culture, MEA-MFT will resist any attempt the department of education, the state of Montana, or anyone else might make to turn this grant into an opportunity of any sort to privatize elementary and secondary education in Montana.

Please contact me at 406-442-4250 with questions.

Sincerely,

(b)(6)

(b)(6)

President



Health Services Division
301 W. Alder
Missoula, MT 59802-4123
Phone: (406) 258-4750
Fax: (406) 258-4913

Deborah S. Delisle
Assistant Secretary of Elementary
and Secondary Education
U.S. Department of Education

and

George H. Sheldon
Acting Assistant Secretary for
Children and Families
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

October 9, 2013

Dear Ms. Delise and Mr. Sheldon,

Missoula City-County Health Department (MCCHD) wishes to support the State of Montana's application for the Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge Grant (CFDA#84.412A). MCCHD is an active member of our local Best Beginning Council and continues to partner with other local agencies that provide early childhood services to support the needs of children and families including access health care, employment opportunities, and social and educational services.

Our commitment to our community's families includes partnership with and outreach through many divisions of the Montana Department of Public Health & Human Services (DPHHS). Our home visiting services, including Nurse-Family Partnership with its proven effectiveness in decreasing childhood injury and improving school readiness, serve pregnant women, infants, and young children in our community. Ideally our services for families begin before birth to positively impact birth outcomes.

Our team of public health nurses, social workers, and nutritionists assist families to increase their capacity to provide a safe and nurturing environment for their children. Through these services we strive to maximize every child's opportunity to grow and learn. In addition, for over 30 years MCCHD has partnered with Child Care Resources in Missoula to provide the dedicated services of a public health nurse to serve as a Child Care Health Consultant.

We believe that the Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge Grant will promote and increase data and systems alignment and parent engagement, improve access to quality programs for all children, including those with medical and social emotional special needs, and increase opportunities for collaboration among community partners in health and early childhood. This work is critical to meaningful systems change built on the bedrock of our most important quality investment, the children of our state.

Please feel free to reach either of us directly if you have any questions or if we can be of further assistance.

Sincerely,

Kate Siegrist, RN, MSN, CNM
Health Services Director
406-258-4986
ksiegrist@co.missoula.mt.us

Shelly Meyer, RN-BC
Child Care Health Consultant
406-728-6446
shelly@childcareresources.org

Montana Advocates for Children
A Coalition of Early Childhood Leaders

October 7, 2013

Deborah S. Delisle
Assistant Secretary of Elementary
and Secondary Education
U.S. Department of Education

George H. Sheldon
Acting Assistant Secretary for
Children and Families
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

Dear Ms. Delise and Mr. Sheldon,

Montana Advocates for Children is in support of and committed to the State of Montana's application for the Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge Grant (CFDA #84.412A).

The Montana Advocates for Children is a coalition of early childhood leaders from child care centers, family homes, head start, child care resource and referral organizations and higher education. The coalition engages in public policy education and advocacy on behalf of Montana's young children, families and early childhood professionals. Our members care for young children and support young families daily. We are committed to strong outcomes for our youngest neighbors. Additionally, we are committed to strengthening the early childhood profession so we are able to attract and retain the most capable early childhood teachers.

Montana is usually near the bottom in annual earnings compared to other states. Nearly half of Montana's young children live in households earning at or below 200% of the federal poverty guidelines. Our Child Care and Development Block Grant subsidy program serves families at or below the 150% of the 2012 federal poverty guideline, which leaves many children without help. And yet, our legislature increased state investments to bring it to this level from the previous 2009 level as there has been no increase in federal support.

Montana has launched a Quality Rating Improvement System, STARS to Quality, which is in the field test stage. It is promising, however, we lack resources to make it available to all child care programs, thus we are unable to systematically support improvement efforts to facilities most likely to serve large numbers of low income children.

Race to the Top is an unprecedented opportunity for Montana to improve birth through five early care and learning systems, as well as to further increase access and quality to high-needs children. This federal opportunity comes at a time when Montana's Governor and Superintendent of Public Instruction are in strong agreement to prioritize early childhood education. Montana must seize this opportunity of federal and state alignment to support young children. We must improve access to quality preschool for all four year olds and improve access to quality programs for high risk children. The components of Montana's proposal which include: parent engagement, systems alignment, early childhood workforce development, appropriate and validated screening and assessment, and data alignment, are critical for meaningful systems change and quality investments in our state.

development, appropriate and validated screening and assessment, and data alignment, are critical for meaningful systems change and quality investments in our state.

We appreciate this opportunity to support Montana's application for the Race to the Top, Early Learning Challenge grant. We stand with Governor Bullock and Superintendent Juneau in their request for this grant and we are ready to work as partners to implement and support this plan.

Sincerely,

(b)(6)

MT Head Start Association

(b)(6)

MT Child Care Resource and Referral Network

(b)(6)

MT Child Care Association

(b)(6)

MT Association for the Education of Young Children

**Montana Association for the Education of Young Children**

4765 Carolin Lane

Florence, MT 59833

sharon.dibrito@gmail.com

October 9, 2013

Deborah S. Delisle

Assistant Secretary of Elementary and Secondary Education

U.S. Department of Education

George H. Sheldon

Acting Assistant Secretary for Children and Families

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

RE: Montana Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge CFDA #84.412A

Dear Ms. Delisle and Mr. Sheldon:

The Montana Association for the Education of Young Children (MtAEYC) is a membership organization of professionals that advocates for the early childhood workforce and provides leadership and professional development opportunities for early childhood educators. MtAEYC is an affiliate of the National Association for the Education of Young Children with seven active chapters located across the state and is committed to bringing high-quality early care and education to all young children.

We view the Early Learning Challenge grant as an opportunity to bring child-serving agencies together to develop a shared, high-quality, and sustainable plan for action. We are pleased that Montana is seeking to create an integrated cross-sector system that will greatly increase the number of children with high-needs who will be educated by a well-trained workforce in high-quality early childhood programs. MtAEYC has been a partner in efforts to improve quality through working on national, state, and local committees, educating our members, and advocating for sound principles of quality. We are committed to continue our work through collaborations and partnerships with the intention of improving outcomes for children and families.

We are proud of Montana's past efforts and accomplishments in taking a comprehensive and coordinated approach to early childhood systems. We join Governor Bullock and Superintendent Juneau in their request for the Early Learning Challenge Grant in order to achieve the goal that every Montana child and family is ready and supported as they enter the K-12 system. We urge your positive consideration of Montana's grant application.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at sharon.dibrito@gmail.com.

Sincerely,

(b)(6)

Executive Director



MONTANA UNIVERSITY SYSTEM

October 5, 2013

Deborah S. Delisle
Assistant Secretary of Elementary and Secondary Education
U.S. Department of Education

and

George H. Sheldon
Acting Assistant Secretary for Children and Families
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

RE: Montana Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge CFDA # 84.412A

Dear Assistant Secretary Delisle and Acting Assistant Secretary Sheldon,
Please accept this letter of support for the State of Montana's application to the Race to the Top - Early Learning Challenge grant. We, the undersigned, represent the collaborative commitment of four-year institutions of higher education in the Montana University System that offer an undergraduate degree in Early Childhood Education. We have been meeting regularly to discuss ways in which we can support this initiative and we plan to continue effectively collaborating to ensure that the state of Montana advances our goals to continue to improve Early Childhood Education.

In Montana, we have a vision of an early childhood system that supports children ages 0-8 and their families, including prenatal care. We believe that every Montana child should have access to a safe, high quality early childhood education that includes developmentally appropriate curricula consistent and representative of the Montana Early Learning Guidelines, Montana K – 3 standards, and the early childhood program standards of the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). Every Montana child should have access to knowledgeable and well-trained program staff and educators, and comprehensive services that support children's cognitive, language, health, nutrition, social, and emotional well-being in an environment that respects and supports diversity. Young children who are supported are more likely to be prepared for success in K-12 and beyond.

At the higher education level, we believe we have the responsibility to provide a comprehensive four-year degree to men and women with professional ambitions to work with children and families in a variety of contexts. Therefore, we are committed to offering higher education coursework that promotes an understanding of 1) child development and learning, 2) family systems, 3) community partnerships, 4) curriculum and assessment, and 5) professionalism, including advocacy and ethics in early childhood education. Coursework and fieldwork experiences ensure that our students are able to read, reflect upon, and apply early childhood research in practice. The goals of our early childhood programs in higher education are consistent with the nationally recognized professional preparation standards of the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC).

As advocates for young children, families, and the early childhood profession, we encourage our students to join our efforts to promote high quality early childhood education for all. We believe in ongoing professional development and collaboration between and among agencies that share a common vision to best meet the needs of all children and families.

In closing, we give our full support to the proposed Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge grant application for the State of Montana.

Sincerely,

(b)(6)

(b)(6)

Associate Professor
Montana State University-Bozeman
Early Childhood Education & Child Services

(b)(6)

(b)(6)

Assistant Professor
Montana State University-Bozeman
Early Childhood Education & Child Services

(b)(6)

(b)(6)

Dean
Salish Kootenai College Division of Education

(b)(6)

(b)(6)

Chair
Salish Kootenai College Early Childhood and
Elementary Education

(b)(6)

Interim Assistant Provost
University of Montana - Western

(b)(6)

(b)(6)

Professor
UM Western Early Childhood Education



Northwest Montana Head Start, Inc.
79 7th Avenue East North
Kalispell, Montana 59901



406.752.7011 Administration Office

FAX 406.755.1916

an equal opportunity provider and employer

Kalispell Head Start
 Administration & School
 79 7th Avenue East North
 Kalispell, MT 59901
 Phone 406 752.7011

North Valley Head Start
 80 Railroad Street
 Columbia Falls, MT 59912
 Phone 406.892.4144

Tobacco Valley Head Start
 Eureka Elementary School
 235 7th Street East
 Eureka MT 59917
 Phone 406.297.5507

October 8, 2013

Deborah S. Delisle
 Assistant Secretary of Elementary
 and Secondary Education
 U.S. Department of Education

and

George H. Sheldon
 Acting Assistant Secretary for
 Children and Families
 U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

Dear Ms. Delise and Mr. Sheldon,

This letter demonstrates Northwest Montana Head Start, Inc. commitment and support of the State of Montana's application for the Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge Grant (CFDA #84.412A).

Northwest Montana Head Start serves high risk families in Flathead and Northern Lincoln counties. Our program prepares the most vulnerable children and families for the rigors of elementary school and life. The low-income families and their children aged three to five of Northwest Montana Head Start are faced with physical, social, economic and financial challenges in their daily lives. Through the supportive, comprehensive services provided by Head Start, these families are prepared to meet the challenges life presents to them and to have their children enter kindergarten with the tools they need to succeed in school.

This is an unprecedented opportunity for Montana to improve birth through five early care and learning systems, as well as to further increase access and quality to high-needs children. Montana should take action to assure access to preschool for all four-year-olds through a collaborative process engaging child care, Head Start programs and school districts, along with other community agencies. This process must include parent engagement, systems alignment, early childhood workforce development, appropriate and validated screening and assessment, and data alignment; for meaningful systems change and quality investments to occur in our state. Coordination of services for young children and families across multiple systems, expansion and implementation of early learning and development standards and quality practices will ensure that every child has access to quality early learning opportunities throughout the state.

We appreciate this opportunity to support Montana's application for the Race to the Top, Early Learning Challenge grant. We stand with Governor Bullock and Superintendent Juneau in their request for this grant and we are ready to work as partners to implement and support this plan. Please contact me at (insert contact info) with questions.

Sincerely,

(b)(6)

Executive Director



October 8, 2013

Deborah S. Delisle
Assistant Secretary of Elementary
and Secondary Education
U.S. Department of Education

and

George H. Sheldon
Acting Assistant Secretary for
Children and Families
U.S. Department of Health and
Human Services

Dear Ms. Delise and Mr. Sheldon,

We write this letter to demonstrate the O.P. and W.E. Edwards Foundation's firm commitment and support of the State of Montana's application for the Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge Grant (CFDA #84.412A).

The O.P. and W.E. Edwards Foundation is a small family foundation headquartered in Red Lodge, Montana. We support organizations that help provide a bridge to a life of greater opportunity to low-income, at-risk, underserved youth and children. We believe that these children deserve assistance that is holistic and long lasting. To this end, we make grants primarily to non-profit Child Care Centers, Pre-schools and Out of School Time Organizations for general, program or scholarship support. We have a special interest in helping Native American children, youth and their families, especially in Montana.

The Edwards Foundation has supported early childhood care and education for years. In this past fiscal year, we supplied \$560,000 in funding to organizations working with youth ages 0-8. Our focus in early childcare has predominately been providing scholarship support to families that fall through the cracks of county or state assistance. We have long been involved in Vermont's efforts to improve quality child care and access by funding the development of their quality rating system, their successful implementation of public preschool and their Birth to Three initiative which is helping improve the quality and access to child care in the state for the youngest children. We are now collaborating on similar efforts in Montana. We have been significant supporters of the Promise Neighborhoods grant on the Northern Cheyenne Reservation, we are members of the Montana Early Childhood Initiative funders group which just put out an RFP for Family, Friends and

The O.P. and W.E. Edwards Foundation | PO Box 2445 | Red Lodge, MT 59068

406-446-1077 | 406-446-1363 fax | info@opweedwards.org | opweedwards.org

Neighbors provider training, and are members of an informal group of funders, government agencies and departments and other organizations working to move the needle on early childhood care and education in this state, of which this grant application is a part.

Our experience in Vermont has helped us to see what is possible in early childhood care and education in a rural state when the state and local government supported by private companies, philanthropy and individuals is dedicated to improving care and access for all children and families. We believe that Montana can achieve its goals of access to quality childcare, public preschool, an improved workforce, more engaged and educated parents, improved assessment and systems alignment. With strong support of early childhood issues by both Governor Bullock and President Obama, the time is right to raise awareness of the developmental, economic and social benefits of a strong early childhood program in the state.

Research has shown that from birth until the age of five is a key stage in brain development and that early intervention can have profound effects upon later success. We agree with the governor, that every Montana child should have access to a safe, high quality early childhood education that includes developmentally appropriate curriculum, knowledgeable and well-trained program staff and educators, comprehensive services that support their health, nutrition, and social well-being, in an environment that respects and supports diversity. As parents, grandparents, great-grandparents, engaged citizens and philanthropists we know the benefits of high quality, consistent care provided by loving, conscientious parents, family, friends and providers. We are dedicated to making this a reality for all Montana families.

Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

(b)(6)

(b)(6)

President

The O.P. and W.E. Edwards Foundation | PO Box 2445 | Red Lodge, MT 59068

406-446-1077 | 406-446-1363 fax | info@opweedwards.org | opweedwards.org



October 9, 2013

Deborah S. Delisle
Assistant Secretary of Elementary
and Secondary Education
U.S. Department of Education

and

George H. Sheldon
Acting Assistant Secretary for
Children and Families
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

Dear Ms. Delise and Mr. Sheldon,

This letter demonstrates the Park County Community Foundation's commitment and support of the State of Montana's application for the Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge Grant (CFDA #84.412A).

The Park County Community Foundation is the lead agency with the Park County Pathway Early Childhood Coalition. A partnership between the various community organizations, programs and parents that serve our community's most important asset- its families with young children.

We have a five tiered approach to serving our young families and early childhood educational access is an important component of our initiative. We support your application to enhance services in this area.

The Park County Pathway strives to promote healthy maternal outcomes, identifying developmental issues early and providing resources for parents and daycare programs to thrive. Funding for this area is thin and the possibility of leveraging public dollars with enhance our mission of "Starting every Park County child on a pathway of positive possibilities".

We appreciate this opportunity to support Montana's application for the Race to the Top, Early Learning Challenge grant. We stand with Governor Bullock and Superintendent Juneau in their request for this grant and we are ready to work as partners to implement and support this plan.

Please contact me at (insert contact information) with questions.

Sincerely,

Ted Madden, MBA
Executive Director
Park County Community Foundation
PO Box 2199
Livingston, MT 59047
maddent@pccf-montana.org



Deborah S. Delisle
Assistant Secretary of Elementary and Secondary Education
U.S. Dept. of Education

George H. Sheldon
Acting Assistant Secretary for Children and Families
U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services

RE: Montana Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge CFDA #84.412A

October 9, 2013

Dear Ms. Delisle and Mr. Sheldon,

I am writing this letter in enthusiastic support of our state's proposal to take part in the Early Learning Challenge program. As mental health professional with over 20 years of experience working with families in Montana, I can confidently speak to the need for the development of a system that better supports young children, their families, and the professionals working with them.

As the Clinical Director of Florence Crittenton Home and Services in Helena, I work every day with the most at-risk young parents and their (also highly at-risk) young children from across Montana. These young families bring with them multiple challenges including poverty, homelessness, and a history filled with multiple traumas. But they also bring an eagerness to learn, grow, thrive and be the best they can be despite their challenges. Florence Crittenton provides residential and community-based outreach services to these young families so that they can be supported to become healthy and successful in all areas of their lives. Our focus is on early assessment and intervention with infants/toddlers and their caregivers as we know that directing resources toward the youngest children and new families is the best investment that can be made.

As a part of this investment, I have been part of multiple community and statewide coalitions to work on better serving the needs of young children and their families. In both statewide and community needs assessments conducted last year, there were many deficits and needs found in our early childhood system of care. We have much work to do to better prepare our children for school and lifelong success. As a mental health therapist, it is no surprise that my interest centers around encouraging and supporting healthy social-emotional development in young children and I have learned a great deal over the years regarding the needs in Montana in this arena. I have been fortunate to attend the Zero To Three National Training Institute on three separate occasions and have invested much of my time in researching what other states are doing in this area which has given me insight into the needs of our state.

We greatly need an infant/toddler mental health system in Montana, and I believe that an Early Learning Challenge Grant is an excellent means to help us create this much needed system of care. We are very much behind other states in ensuring that there are adequate professionals, supports and

changing the future ... two lives at a time

services in place to meet the dire needs of our most vulnerable population. It is imperative that we target support to young children and families BEFORE there are major social/emotional concerns. Identifying a child with behavioral problems or mental health issues once they reach school age is too late; we must put preventative and early intervention practices in place to fully equip our children to feel safe and confident and to have the skills necessary to cope with challenges in positive and healthy ways so that they can attain maximum success across ALL domains before they enter our public school system. Kids cannot learn if they are dealing with fear, anxiety, depression, difficult family situations, have poor trust in adults, or other emotional concerns.

In order to do better meet the needs of this population, we need professional development opportunities to help us to develop a well trained workforce that specializes in these issues in early childhood. We need to bring evidence-based therapeutic practices into the state targeted to working with infants/toddlers and their caregivers. We need to develop an early childhood mental health consultation system so that professionals who understand these issues with young children are available to support childcare providers and pre-school teachers as they care for our youngest children. We need to better educate medical professionals and put early screening and assessment in place for all infants/toddlers in our state so that potential problems are caught and interventions can be provided as early as possible.

I believe an Early Learning Challenge grant would allow Montana to finally improve these, and so many other needed mechanisms lacking in our early childhood system. This opportunity would finally bring Montana in line with other states doing great work in supporting the needs of young children and their families. Our children and families are worth it; our professionals are ready and I believe we have never before been in a better place as a state to tackle the challenges we face and make excellent use of these resources.

Please don't hesitate to contact me if I can be of further assistance in this process.

(b)(6)



Clinical Director



Prevention Resource Center

Interagency Coordinating Council AmeriCorps* VISTA

Mission: To create and sustain a coordinated and comprehensive system of prevention services in the state of Montana.



October 4, 2013

Subject: Letter of Support – Montana Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge Grant

Dear Grant Review Committee:

The Montana Prevention Resource Center (PRC), the working arm of the Interagency Coordinating Council (ICC) for State Prevention Programs, has focused its work on creating and sustaining a coordinated, comprehensive system of prevention services in the State of Montana. To that end, the Council and its work group have set forth five youth improvement goals:

- Goal 1 – Reduce child abuse and neglect by promoting child safety and healthy family functioning.
- Goal 2 – Reduce youth use of tobacco, alcohol, and other drugs by promoting alternate activities and healthy lifestyles.
- Goal 3 – Reduce youth violence and crime by promoting the safety of all citizens.
- Goal 4 – Reduce school dropout by increasing the percentage of high school students who successfully transition from school to work, postsecondary education, training and/or military.
- Goal 5 – Reduce teen pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases by promoting the concept that sexual activity, pregnancy and child rearing are serious responsibilities.

*****The priority strategy has been to influence decision making and reduce harm associated with substance abuse with cross-system collaboration focusing on youth ages 12-21.*****

Here in Montana, underage drinking is a serious public health concern. Alcohol remains the number one drug of abuse for Montana's youth. In fact, in 2012, results from the statewide Prevention Needs Assessment Survey of 14,575 students in grades 8, 10 and 12 revealed that 18.8 percent of 8th graders, 36.9 percent of 10th graders, and 49.5 percent of 12th graders had used alcohol within the past 30 days.

Even more frightening, more than one in ten Montana 8th graders (11%), one in four 10th graders (25.7%) and one in three 12th graders (37%) had engaged in binge drinking. This is defined as having had five or more alcoholic drinks in a row during the past two weeks. Further, binge drinking begins as early as sixth grade, and new evidence shows that underage drinking can cause permanent damage to a teen's rapidly developing brain.

Why is this important in an early childhood development and support system?

- Most 6-year-olds know that alcohol is only for adults. Between the ages of 9 and 13, children start to view alcohol more positively. Many children begin to think underage drinking is OK. Some even start to experiment.
- About 10 percent of 12-year-olds say they've tried alcohol, but by age 15, that number jumps to 50 percent.
- Underage drinking is not just a problem for parents of children who drink. It can have a ripple effect throughout a community. Recent studies indicate that drinking at a young age can derail a child's brain and cognitive, physical, and social/emotional development leading to low school performance, an increase in the risk of social problems, depression, suicidal thoughts and violence. (American Medical Association)
- Studies have shown that parents have a significant influence on young people's decisions about alcohol consumption, especially when parents create supportive and nurturing environments in which

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Vicki Turner – Director • Abby Zent – AmeriCorps*VISTA Supervisor • Amanda Paramore – VISTA Leader •





Prevention Resource Center

Interagency Coordinating Council AmeriCorps* VISTA

Mission: *To create and sustain a coordinated and comprehensive system of prevention services in the state of Montana.*



their children can make their own decisions. In fact, more than 80 percent of children say parents are the leading influence in their decision to drink or not.

The need for positive parental involvement has never been greater, and how a parent “parents a teen” is a direct result of how they have parented in early and middle childhood.

Addressing strategies, tools and supports, and interventions starts in early childhood and follows through the continuum and stages of life. Montana’s Race to the Top, Early Learning Challenge grant will reach children and families early, particularly those at the most risk through a variety of solutions and actions that engage everyday people, families, community organizations and government programs.

The grant’s outcomes will help build protective factors, resiliency and capacity in families, schools and communities through:

- Expanding access to quality services for children and families,
- Raise standards for early childhood providers,
- Build upon existing programs such as Head Start, STARs to Quality and Graduation Matters,
- Increase coordination of wrap-around services,
- Prepare all Montana children to be kindergarten-ready, and,
- Strengthen and promote the early childhood workforce.

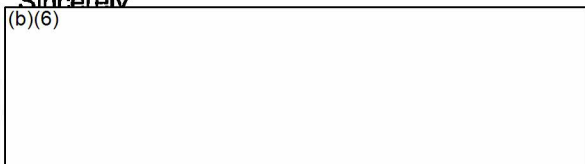
Through Promoting Early Learning and Development Outcomes for Children, Montana will “move the needle” in changing the life course of children and families in our state. By investing in high quality learning and development programs, we can increase graduation rates, prepare our youth to be tomorrow’s workforce, mitigate adolescent risky behaviors and reduce unintended health and behavioral consequences later in life.

It is an exciting time and opportunity to support the work and align systems that impact children and families in Montana, particularly under the leadership of Governor Bullock and Superintendent Juneau. The Prevention Resource Center and the Interagency Coordinating Council for State Prevention Programs’ Work Group are committed to aid with “building the bridges” and closing the service and program gaps in our state.

Thank you for the opportunity to support Montana’s Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge grant application.

Sincerely

(b)(6)



Prevention Resource Center Director



Ravalli Head Start, Inc.

October 8, 2013

Deborah S. Delise
Assistant Secretary of Elementary and Secondary Education
U.S. Department of Education

George H. Sheldon
Acting Assistant Secretary for Children and Families
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

Dear Ms. Delise and Mr. Sheldon,

This letter demonstrates support from Ravalli Head Start, Inc. of the State of Montana's application for the Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge Grant (CFDA #84.412A).

Ravalli Head Start, Inc. provides birth to 5 services to 170 low income children and their families in Ravalli County and provides Early Head Start services to 68 low-income children birth to age three in Missoula County. As a result of comprehensive services provided by Ravalli Head Start, Inc., children in Missoula and Ravalli County have enhanced confidence and school readiness skills and families have increased capacity to provide healthy, nurturing and stimulating environments for their children.

Comprehensive services produce successful outcomes for children and families experiencing poverty. Family well-being and their engagement in their child's development and learning promotes enduring progress for children. Our program provides center based and home based services that are grounded in strength-based partnerships with the family and includes their engagement in individualized assessment and curriculum and instruction.

Early identification and intervention services are also key elements provided through our Early Head Start/Head Start Program that ensures healthy growth and development and advances school readiness skills prenatal to school age. In 2012 2013, 20% of the enrolled children in Ravalli Head Start, Inc. had identified disabilities. We work collaboratively with our families and our Part B and Part C partners to ensure delivery of individualized services for these children.

Ravalli Head Start, Inc. strongly supports the Race to the Top application to increase Montana's capacity to provide coordinated, high quality and comprehensive services to children and families at the greatest risk throughout our state.

In addition, we understand that the Race to the Top proposal will include additional support for the Community Advisory Councils. The Ravalli County Best Beginnings Community Council looks forward to working as part of the project to improve opportunities for young children in Ravalli County.

Respectfully,

(b)(6)

Executive Director

(b)(6)

Program Director & Ravalli County Best Beginnings Community Council Representative

Ravalli Head Start, Inc.
81 Kurtz Lane
Hamilton, MT 59840
406.363.1217

Ravalli Early Head Start
103 South 9th Street, Suite 106
Hamilton, Montana 59840
406.363.7412

Missoula Early Head Start
2121 39th Street
Missoula, MT 59803
406.251.9410



REGION IV FAMILY OUTREACH, INC.

www.familyoutreach.org

Administration

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Helena, MT 59601
(406)443-3083
(406)443-3209 fax

Supported Living

1236 Helena Ave
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(406)587-9526 fax

641 Sampson
Butte Mt 59701
(406)494-1242
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October 9, 2013

Deborah S Delisle
Assistant Secretary of Elementary and
Secondary Education
U.S. Department of Education

And

George H. Sheldon
Acting Assistant Secretary for Children and
Families
U.S. Department of Health and Human
Services

Dear Ms. Delisle and Mr. Sheldon,

This letter demonstrated Region IV Family Outreach's commitment and support of the State of Montana's application for the Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge Grant (CFDA #84.412A).

Family Outreach provides educational and support services to children and adults with developmental disabilities. The current services we provide are as follows:

- Part C (0-3) Early Intervention.
- Title XX (0-18) Children 0-8 years old and are "at risk" for developmental delays or children 8-18 years old with intellectual disabilities.
- Waiver (0208) (birth to adulthood) provides services to children with intellectual disabilities.
- Children's Autism Waiver (15 months to 7 years old) CAW is an intensive behavioral intervention for children diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder and who have deficits in adaptive behavior.
 - After three years in the CAW program families have experienced the following results: 43% of the children who participated were non-autistic as measured by the CARS assessment, 62% were no longer eligible for the intellectual disability waiver due to the progress they had made in the program and 100% of program participants were toilet trained.
- Autism Insurance Services (AIS) for children 15 months to 18 years old. Use their family insurance benefits to utilize intensive behavioral interventions in the home environment.

- Supported Employment (18 years through adulthood) is an approach to vocational rehabilitation for individuals with disabilities so they can obtain competitive work in their community.
- Payee Services (18 years through adulthood) assistance with monthly budget development and personal expense payments.

As stated earlier Family Outreach supports this application as we are a Part C and Children's Autism Waiver provider that utilizes the home based early intervention model for children with developmental delays or intellectual disabilities.

Our organization has grown from provider that worked with 64 families in 1977 to a program that provide services to over 600 families and individuals in the past fiscal year.

We see this grant strengthening our ability to provide services in the following ways:

- Increasing the number of early interventions through child finds.
- Training Family Support Specialists on Routine Based Early Intervention model which will improve Part-C services.
- Improve coordination with transitions from Part-C to Part-B services.
- Improve quality of programs by purchasing updated training materials on childhood development, early intervention, assessments, screening, family training, and collaborative home visits.
- Improve home visiting practices by updating our access to technology and information in rural settings.

This is an unprecedented opportunity for Montana to improve birth through five early care and learning systems. As well as expanding access to quality early intervention services for high needs children.

The grant will also enable providers to improve parent engagement, data systems and early childhood screening and assessment via improved access to appropriate screening tools.

Overall we believe this grant would be a great investment in our state and the future of our children.

Therefore in closing, we fully endorse Montana's application for the Race to the Top, Early Learning Challenge grant, we support Governor Bullock and Superintendent Juneau in their quest to improve the quality of educational programing in this great state as we plan for the future of the next generation.

Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions. You can reach me at: 406-443-3083.

Respectfully submitted,

(b)(6)

Executive Director

Region IV Family Outreach, Inc.

*The Big Sky Country***MONTANA HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES****REPRESENTATIVE EDITH (EDIE) MCCLAFFERTY**
HOUSE DISTRICT 75HELENA ADDRESS:
CAPITOL BUILDING
PO BOX 200400
HELENA, MONTANA 59620-0400
PHONE: (406) 444-4800HOME ADDRESS:
1311 STUART
BUTTE, MT 59701
PHONE: (406) 782-2700
CELL: (406) 490-5873

October 7, 2013

Deborah S. Delisle
Assistant Secretary of Elementary and Secondary Education
U.S. Department of Education

and

George H. Sheldon
Acting Assistant Secretary for Children and Families
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

RE: Montana Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge CFDA # 84.412A

Dear Assistant Secretary Delisle and Acting Assistant Secretary Sheldon,

As an educator, a Montana State Representative, and a strong advocate of early childhood education, I am pleased to submit this letter in support of Governor Steve Bullock and State Superintendent of Public Instruction Denise Juneau in their pursuit of the Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge Federal Grant.

I believe that early education is the key for a child to be successful in school and throughout life. Children who have participated in quality early learning programs such as Head Start and STARS to Quality child care programs are more successful in school than children who have not had the same opportunity. As a teacher, I have seen these children enter school ready to learn. They have better vocabularies than their peers. They have knowledge of the alphabet; they know how to print their names and how to count.

The Early Learning Challenge Grant will give Montana the opportunity to build on Montana's system of early learning to make it more efficient, more sustainable, and evidence-based. As a result, we will insure that more Montana children will start kindergarten prepared to succeed.

As a result of the improvements planned through the Early Learning Challenge Federal Grant process, services will be expanded to serve more low income children and families, and also more families that

live in rural areas and tribal communities. These families will have greater access to quality services that otherwise would not be available, helping break the cycle of poverty for many Montana's families.

With the Early Learning Challenge Federal Grant we will be able to build on what works to invest in our children and their future. Head Start's program of comprehensive wrap-around services for children and families is a proven model. It makes sense to model Montana's public preschool program on Head Start, including strong family and community engagement. These investments will save taxpayers' dollars by decreasing the need for special education services, lowering the drop-out rate, and lowering the rates of juvenile delinquency, adult incarceration, and the need for public assistance.

I am passionate about early education and its importance to our children and families. In each of the last three legislative sessions, I have introduced legislation providing state funding for Head Start. I have not been successful to date, but I fully intend to succeed in passing this legislation in 2015.

I ask you to give the State of Montana serious consideration for the Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge Federal Grant. We cannot afford to waste this opportunity to build a better future for our children.

Sincerely,

(b)(6)

House Representative



Senator Tom Facey
Senate District 48

Capitol Building
PO Box 200400
Helena MT 59620-0400

October 7, 2013

Deborah S. Delisle
Assistant Secretary of Elementary and Secondary Education
U.S. Department of Education

and

George H. Sheldon
Acting Assistant Secretary for Children and Families
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

RE: Montana Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge CFDA # 84.412A

Dear Assistant Secretary Delisle and Acting Assistant Secretary Sheldon,

I am writing to support Montana's Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge grant request. Montana understands that our education system, from pre-K through higher education, should be as seamless as possible. Improving early childhood education opportunities while also improving the quality of early childhood education will help Montana reach that goal.

Montana's rural nature sometimes is an obstacle to providing quality early childhood education. Montana's Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge will help increase the number of safe and supportive early learning environments that follow carefully developed standards that increase the quality of early childhood education. Additionally, this grant would lead to additional and historic collaboration between Early Childhood providers, Montana's Office of Public Instruction, the Board of Public Education, the Montana University System and Tribal Colleges, and private partners to build a strong workforce to serve our youngest Montanans.

Montana has instituted a program to increase graduation rates of our high school students. Sometimes a strong early childhood education is the missing component that will help a student and their families realize the goal of high school graduation. This grant will help achieve the goal of every child graduating from high school.

As a member of the State Senate I will work to ensure that state funds that are required to support and continue the work of this grant are included in Montana's appropriation bill.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Tom Facey".

Tom Facey
Senator District 48

JON TESTER
MONTANA

COMMITTEES:
APPROPRIATIONS
BANKING
INDIAN AFFAIRS
VETERANS' AFFAIRS
HOMELAND SECURITY AND
GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS

United States Senate

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SUITE 706
WASHINGTON, DC 20510
202-224-2691

MONTANA TOLL FREE NUMBER
1-800-554-4403

INTERNET:
<http://tester.senate.gov/contact>

October 9, 2013

The Honorable Arne Duncan, Secretary
U.S. Department of Education
400 Maryland Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20202

Dear Secretary Duncan:

I write in support of the Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge application submitted by Montana's Department of Public Health & Human Services. This proposal would expand access to quality services for children in Montana and set them on the right course to succeed throughout their academic careers. I share the Administration's support for meaningful early childhood education and know Montana would maximize the resources provided by this grant.

As a former teacher, I understand how important it is to ensure children are adequately prepared for kindergarten and beyond. Studies show that access to strong early childhood education has a significant impact on children's academic performance throughout their life. By preparing them for school at a young age, these children are more likely to excel in school and live healthier, more productive lives.

This grant would have a big impact in Montana communities, particularly in rural communities. The State would build up capacity, expand existing programs and offer better services to children with special needs. I have been critical of Race to the Top grants because they often overlook the needs and infrastructure of rural schools, but I believe this grant could go a long way in reversing that trend.

I appreciate the Administration's work to provide our country's children with a solid educational foundation. Thank you for your consideration of Montana's Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge application.

Sincerely,

(b)(6)

BOZEMAN
(406) 586-4450

BUTTE
(406) 723-3277

GLENDALE
(406) 365-2391

GREAT FALLS
(406) 452-9585

HELENA
(406) 449-5401

KALISPELL
(406) 257-3360

BILLINGS
(406) 252-0550

MISSOULA
(406) 728-3003



Phyllis J. Washington
College of Education and Human Sciences
Office of the Dean
The University of Montana
32 Campus Drive
Missoula, Montana 59812-6336

October 11, 2013

Deborah S. Delisle
Assistant Secretary of Elementary and Secondary Education
U.S. Department of Education

George H. Sheldon
Acting Assistant Secretary for Children and Families
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

RE: Montana Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge CFDA # 84.4t2A

Dear Assistant Secretary Delisle and Acting Assistant Secretary Sheldon,

The University of Montana fully embraces Montana's application to the Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge. The University of Montana is one of two doctoral research universities in Montana and serves as the flagship of four affiliated campuses, including UM-Western which prepares the highest number of graduates in Montana with early childhood degrees at both the associate and bachelors levels.

This Early Learning Challenge proposal builds on longstanding initiatives and practices unique to the preparation of education professionals in UM's Phyllis J. Washington College of Education and Human Sciences. The College is home to two nationally accredited Pre-School programs that facilitate pre-service teacher clinical experiences and faculty and graduate student research. With an active early childhood research agenda, UM is leading the state in research that will improve the efficacy of preschool practices that will enhance the outcomes for our youngest populations. Building on this commitment to serving our youngest and often most vulnerable population, UM's elementary education program is the first in the state to embed preschool education in the required curriculum with dedicated coursework in early literacy and assessment methods and early numeracy and assessment methods. Also leading the state in required hours of clinical experience, all elementary education students complete Pre-K clinical experiences allowing candidates to build a clear connection between this coursework and the opportunity to apply new knowledge in our high quality preschool settings.

The University of Montana is uniquely poised to advance the goals set forth in the Early Learning Challenge. With a strong history of teaching and research focused on preschool education, we look forward to collaborating with our colleagues in the Montana University System and Montana's Tribal

Colleges to lead these initiatives that will serve to enhance outcomes for young children and their families in our state.

Sincerely,

(b)(6)

President
University of Montana

(b)(6)

Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs
University of Montana

(b)(6)

Dean
Phyllis J. Washington College of Education and Human Sciences
University of Montana

(b)(6)

Associate Dean
Phyllis J. Washington College of Education and Human Sciences
University of Montana



montana early childhood project

The Montana Career Path: A Framework for Professional Development

Early Childhood Practitioner

- ◆ Eight (8) hours of approved training (may include orientation or in-service training) in the last year
- ◆ Current First Aid **and** CPR certification
- ◆ Currently working in an Early Childhood setting**
- ◆ Annual training required for renewal: 8 hours of approved training (if in licensed program, the 8 hours required for state licensing will count)

Level 1

- ◆ High School diploma or GED certificate
- ◆ Fifteen (15) hours of approved entry level training (may NOT include orientation) in the last year
- ◆ Current First Aid **and** CPR certification
- ◆ Minimum of 500 hours working in an Early Childhood setting**
- ◆ Annual training required for renewal: 15 hours of approved training (plus 8 hours required for state licensing, if applicable, for a total of 23 hours)

Level 2

- ◆ High School diploma or GED certificate
- ◆ 60 hours of approved training in the past 5 years
- ◆ Current First Aid **and** CPR certification
- ◆ Minimum of 500 hours working in an Early Childhood setting**
- ◆ Annual training required for renewal: 15 hours of approved training (plus 8 hours required for state licensing, if applicable, for a total of 23 hours)

Level 3

- ◆ Current national Child Development Associate (CDA) credential
- ◆ **–OR–**
- ◆ Current National Association for Family Child Care (NAFCC) accreditation and 120 hours of approved training in the past 5 years
- ◆ Minimum of 1000 hours working in an Early Childhood setting**
- ◆ Individual membership in a professional Early Childhood organization
- ◆ Annual training required for renewal: 15 hours of approved training (plus 8 hours required for state licensing, if applicable, for a total of 23 hours)

Level 4 Certification

- ◆ Current national CDA credential plus at least 20 semester college credits* in Early Childhood Education/Child Development
- ◆ **–OR–**
- ◆ Current Montana Child Care Development Specialist Apprenticeship Certificate (college coursework required)
- ◆ **–OR–**
- ◆ One year certificate requiring 30 college credits* in Early Childhood Education/Child Development
- ◆ Minimum of 1000 hours working in an Early Childhood setting**
- ◆ Individual membership in a professional Early Childhood organization
- ◆ Annual training required for renewal: 15 hours of approved training (plus 8 hours required for state licensing, if applicable, for a total of 23 hours)

Level 5 Certification

- ◆ Associate's Degree with at least 20 semester college credits in Early Childhood Education/Child Development*
- ◆ 300 hours supervised teaching experience
- ◆ Minimum of 1000 hours working in an Early Childhood setting**
- ◆ Membership in a professional Early Childhood organization
- ◆ Annual training required for renewal: 15 hours of approved training (plus 8 hours required for state licensing, if applicable, for a total of 23 hours)

Level 6 Certification

- ◆ Bachelor's Degree with at least 20 semester college credits in Early Childhood Education/Child Development*
- ◆ 300 hours supervised teaching experience
- ◆ Minimum of 1000 hours working in an Early Childhood setting**
- ◆ Individual membership in a professional Early Childhood organization
- ◆ Annual training required for renewal: 15 hours of approved training (plus 8 hours required for state licensing, if applicable, for a total of 23 hours)

Level 7 Certification

- ◆ Bachelor's Degree with an Associate's Degree in Early Childhood Education OR a minor in Early Childhood Education
- ◆ 300 hours supervised teaching experience
- ◆ Minimum of 1000 hours working in an Early Childhood setting**
- ◆ Individual membership in a professional Early Childhood organization
- ◆ Annual training required for renewal: 15 hours of approved training (plus 8 hours required for state licensing, if applicable, for a total of 23 hours)

Level 8 Certification

- ◆ Bachelor's Degree in Early Childhood Education/Child Development*
- ◆ 300 hours supervised teaching experience
- ◆ Minimum of 1000 hours working in an Early Childhood setting**
- ◆ Individual membership in a professional Early Childhood organization
- ◆ Annual training required for renewal: 15 hours of approved training (plus 8 hours required for state licensing, if applicable, for a total of 23 hours)

Level 9 Certification

- ◆ Master's Degree in Early Childhood Education/Child Development*
- ◆ **–OR–**
- ◆ Master's Degree in a related field with emphasis in Early Childhood Education/Child Development*
- ◆ Minimum of 1000 hours working in an Early Childhood setting**
- ◆ Individual membership in a professional Early Childhood organization
- ◆ Annual training required for renewal: 15 hours of approved training (plus 8 hours required for state licensing, if applicable, for a total of 23 hours)

Level 10 Certification

- ◆ Doctorate in Early Childhood Education/Child Development*
- ◆ **–OR–**
- ◆ Doctorate in a related field with Early Childhood Education/Child Development emphasis*
- ◆ Minimum of 1000 hours working in an Early Childhood setting**
- ◆ Individual membership in a professional Early Childhood organization
- ◆ Annual training required for renewal: 15 hours of approved training (plus 8 hours required for state licensing, if applicable, for a total of 23 hours)



*All credits and degrees must be from regionally accredited colleges and universities.





**Early Childhood settings are programs offering services to young children and their families including administrative and teacher/caregiving roles, or programs that conduct training or education in early childhood

Visit www.mtecp.org for more information about The Early Childhood Project.





Updated March 2013

Domain		Best Beginnings STARS to Quality CENTERS - Department of Public Health and Human Services																																																																																																																						
		STAR 1 Meet the following requirements	STAR 2 Meet all Star 1 requirements AND the following	STAR 3 Meet all STAR 1 and 2 requirements AND the following	STAR 4 Meet all STAR 1-3 requirements AND the following	STAR 5 Meet all STAR 1-4 requirements AND the following																																																																																																																		
Education, Qualifications & Training		Registry <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Director current on Practitioner Registry Training <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Director/caregiving staff complete <i>STARS Readiness Training</i>• All staff complete <i>STARS Mandatory Reporting Training</i>.• Director/primary caregivers/ staff that administer medications complete <i>Montana (MT) Medication Administration I</i>• Staff reviewing immunization records complete <i>MT Department of Public Health & Human Services (DPHHS) Immunization Training</i>• Any caregiver caring for infants and or toddlers complete <i>Safe Sleep Training</i>	Registry <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Director current on Practitioner Registry at Level 2 or higher• At least 50% of staff current on Practitioner Registry at any level Training <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Director will complete<ul style="list-style-type: none">– <i>Program Administration Scale</i>– <i>Environmental Rating Scale Training</i>• Director/all education staff complete<ul style="list-style-type: none">– <i>Introduction to the Pyramid Model</i>– <i>Montana Blended Pyramid Module I</i>• All staff are <i>Certified in CPR/First Aid</i>• Director, primary caregivers, staff administering medications complete<ul style="list-style-type: none">– <i>MT Medication Administration II</i>– <i>& MT Medication Administration Refresher</i> every 3 years following <i>MT Medication Administration I & II</i> Individualized Professional Development Plan <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Directors/all staff have an individualized written Professional Development Plan, they must be updated annually.	Registry <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Director current on Practitioner Registry at Level 3 or higher,• 75% of Caregivers are current at any level AND 50% are level 2 or higher Training <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Primary Caregivers caring for infants and/or toddlers must be enrolled or have completed the <i>Certified Infant Toddler Caregiver Course</i> or equivalent.• Primary Caregivers caring for ages 2 and up must be enrolled or have completed the <i>Certified Preschool Teacher Course</i> or equivalent.<ul style="list-style-type: none">– Waiver can be granted if the individual is a Level 4 or higher on the Practitioner Registry or if enrolled in college courses or <i>Montana Apprenticeship</i> program resulting in a Level 4 on the Registry in 2 years of application for STAR 3.– If program serves only ages 2 and up, need to consider developmental levels in children in care send some staff to the <i>Infant Toddler Course</i> and some to the <i>Preschool Course</i>.• Primary Caregivers must complete <i>Oral Health Training</i>• Director/caregiving staff complete <i>Pyramid Model Training - Montana Blended Pyramid Module 2</i>	Registry <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Director current on Practitioner Registry at Level 4 or higher• 75% of caregivers are current at any level AND 50% Level 2 or higher & 25% Level 3 or higher Training <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Primary Caregivers complete:<ul style="list-style-type: none">– The <i>Montana Early Learning Guideline Course</i>– <i>Inclusion I: Foundations for Inclusion</i> or its equivalent.– ED 391: <i>Practicing Inclusion in Preschool Programs</i> is an acceptable equivalent for Inclusion I and Inclusion II.• Direct food service staff complete:<ul style="list-style-type: none">– Approved Food Safety Training AND the CACFP required training.– The ServSafe course for Food Manager Level Certification Course.• Pyramid Model<ul style="list-style-type: none">– Module 3 Overview completed by education staff <u>not</u> taking <i>Preschool Module 3A and 3B</i> or <i>I/T Module 3</i>– Pyramid Module 3 Courses: The Behavior Support Team attend <i>Preschool Module 3A & 3B</i> and or <i>Infant Toddler Module</i>. The coach helps the Team determine	Registry <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Director current on Practitioner Registry at Level 5 or higher.• 75% of caregivers are current at any level AND 50% are Level 2 or higher AND 25% are Level 3 or higher. Training <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Inclusion II: Strategies for Inclusion</i> or equivalent completed by primary caregivers• ED 391: <i>Practicing Inclusion in Preschool Programs</i> is an acceptable equivalent for Inclusion I and Inclusion II. NAEYC Accreditation /Head Start Performance Standards <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Centers must be NAEYC Accredited (Centers)• Early Head Start/Head Start Performance Standards (Head Start Programs). 																																																																																																																		
	Staff/ Caregiver-to-Child Ratio & Group Size	Staffing <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Must meet MT Licensing/Registration requirements• The child to staff ratio for day care center is:<ul style="list-style-type: none">- 4:1 for children zero months through 23 months- 8:1 for children two years through three years- 10:1 for children four years through five years- 14:1 for six years and over• When children of different ages are mixed, the ratio for the youngest child in the group must be maintained.• Only the Director, primary caregivers, aides may be counted as staff in the staff ratio.	Staffing <ul style="list-style-type: none">• A written staffing plan is in place assuring continuity of care (including plan for substitute staff situations), appropriate adult-to-child ratios, appropriate group size, and that children are benefitting from having primary caregivers. Primary Caregivers To ensure quality and continuity of care, the role of Primary Caregiver is as follows: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Every individual child has a Primary Caregiver assigned for a significant portion of time the child is in attendance;• Assessment/care/education services for each child based on the child's strengths, interests, and needs;• Assess/incorporate elements of each family's culture, goals & aspirations for the child for each child's individual care & education program; and• Work, on regular basis, with families and other child care program staff in planning for the child ratio. 	Staffing <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Programs must meet NAEYC Accreditation Standards for correlation ratios, group size, ages for Centers as shown on chart below. <table><tr><th rowspan="2">Age Group</th><th colspan="12">Group Size</th></tr><tr><th>6</th><th>8</th><th>10</th><th>12</th><th>14</th><th>16</th><th>18</th><th>20</th><th>22</th><th>24</th><th></th><th></th></tr><tr><td>Infants Birth to 15 Mo.</td><td>1:3</td><td>1:4</td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr><tr><td>Toddlers Twos 12-28 Mo.</td><td>1:3</td><td>1:4</td><td>1:4</td><td>1:4</td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr><tr><td>Preschool 21-36 Mo.</td><td></td><td>1:4</td><td>1:5</td><td>1:6</td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr><tr><td>Preschool 2.5 yr.-3 yr.</td><td></td><td></td><td>1:6</td><td>1:7</td><td>1:8</td><td>1:9</td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr><tr><td>Preschool 4 yr.</td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td>1:8</td><td>1:9</td><td>1:10</td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr><tr><td>Preschool 5 yr.</td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td>1:8</td><td>1:9</td><td>1:10</td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr><tr><td>Kindergarten</td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td>1:10</td><td>1:11</td><td>1:12</td><td></td><td></td></tr></table>	Age Group	Group Size												6	8	10	12	14	16	18	20	22	24			Infants Birth to 15 Mo.	1:3	1:4											Toddlers Twos 12-28 Mo.	1:3	1:4	1:4	1:4									Preschool 21-36 Mo.		1:4	1:5	1:6									Preschool 2.5 yr.-3 yr.			1:6	1:7	1:8	1:9							Preschool 4 yr.					1:8	1:9	1:10						Preschool 5 yr.						1:8	1:9	1:10					Kindergarten								1:10	1:11	1:12		
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Domain	<div>  <div>Best Beginnings STARS to Quality CENTERS - Department of Public Health and Human Services</div>  </div>				
Family / Community Partnerships	STAR 1 Meet the following requirements	STAR 2 Meet all Star 1 requirements AND the following	STAR 3 Meet all STAR 1 and 2 requirements AND the following	STAR 4 Meet all STAR 1-3 requirements AND the following	STAR 5 Meet all STAR 1-4 requirements AND the following
Leadership & Program Management	Partnerships <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Must meet Montana Licensing/Registration requirements. 	Partnerships <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enrollment Process: A written enrollment process is in place that facilitates an exchange of information between the program and parents, & works to assure strong partnerships. This process should include: description of the program & policies; family culture, & wishes around eating, sleeping, toileting, & discipline. • Child Care Contract: The program has a signed child care contract with each family. Topics in the contract will include at least: required licensing policies, hours, fees payment policy, schedule, vacation, program closure, ill child & absence policy, responsibility for alternative care & termination policy. 	Partnerships <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community Resources - Program provides families with information regarding community resources, e.g.: Child Care Resource & Referral Agencies; public library, city recreation department, housing authority, parent resource center, public health clinic, hospital, public schools, Women, Infant and Children (WIC), Office of Public Assistance (OPA); county health department, family support agency, early intervention organizations such as Hi-Line Home Programs, Inc., Developmental Education Assistance Program (DEAP), Quality Life Concepts (QLC), Support & Techniques for Empowering People (STEP), Early Childhood Intervention (ECI), Family Outreach, and Child Development Center (CDC). Transitions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The program supports children & families while transitioning children into child care & out of child care to other educational setting. Family Involvement <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The program provides families with multiple opportunities for involvement such as: open house, opportunities to volunteer, social events, potluck meals, parent/family surveys, parent resource center, etc. 	Partnerships <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conferences - the program offers, in addition to ongoing conversations, a meeting/conference with each child's family, at least once per year. Together, the child's progress and needs are reviewed, and goals for the child are set. • Home/School Communication: Opportunities are available to facilitate exchange of information between the program and families, such as home/school journals or notebooks, bulletin boards, newsletters, parent advisory councils, parent volunteers, parent participation, etc. 	Partnerships <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NAEYC Accredited • Early Head Start/Head Start Performance Standards (Head Start Programs)
	Emergency Preparedness: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Program has a documented Emergency Preparedness Plan and Process • Go Kits are available in case of emergency. Go kits are packs containing essential items such as food, first aid supplies, diapers, activities (books, games, etc.), contact numbers, flashlight, batteries, etc. 	Licensing Regulations or Head Start Performance Standards <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All caregivers shall have available a copy of State of Montana DPHHS Licensing Requirements for Child Day Care Centers - Including Infant Regulations • All Center staff will sign off that they have read and have access to the Licensing Requirements. • All Early Head Start/Head Start programs shall have the Head Start Performance Standards readily available for all staff. • For licensed Early Head Start/Head Start programs, all staff shall have available a copy of the State of Montana DPHHS Licensing Requirements for Child Day Care Centers - Including Infant Regulations. • All Early Head Start/Head Start staff will sign off that they have read and have access to the Licensing Requirements. 	Program Administration Scale (PAS) Assessment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The program will have a pre-assessment for the first assessment only at this level, completed by a STARS assessor. • Any subscale score below 3.0 for the pre-assessment must be addressed in the Quality Improvement Plan. • Subsequent assessments will be formal assessment, and programs must receive at least a 3.0 overall. 	Program Administration Scale (PAS) Assessment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The program will have a formal assessment. The average score must be at least 4.0. • Any subscale scores below 4.0 must be addressed in the Quality Improvement Plan. 	Leadership & Program Management <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NAEYC Accredited • Early Head Start/Head Start Performance Standards (Head Start Programs) Program Administration Scale (PAS) Assessment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The program will have a formal assessment. The average score must be at least 5.0. • Any subscale scores below 5.0 must be addressed in the Quality Improvement Plan. Professionalism <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Director/primary caregivers are able & committed to contribute to the professionalism of the early childhood field, such as program/director mentoring, STARS mentoring, technical assistance, program-specific sliding fee scales, facilitating approved training at a conference, serving on a professional board, providing Pyramid Model Parent Modules, etc.



Domain	STAR 1 Meet the following requirements	STAR 2 Meet all Star 1 requirements AND the following	STAR 3 Meet all STAR 1 and 2 requirements AND the following	STAR 4 Meet all STAR 1-3 requirements AND the following	STAR 5 Meet all STAR 1-4 requirements AND the following
High Quality Supportive Environments	<p>Daily Health Checks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Documentation that Daily Health Checks are taking place. • Documentation of Special Needs Health Care Plan tailored to the needs of each special needs child. <p>Safety</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If licensed for infants: <i>Back to Sleep</i> materials posted in sleeping area • If licensed for infants, programs has written safe sleep policies 	<p>Meals Preparation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All programs apply to participate in the Montana Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP). This criteria is met if the program is currently participating. • At least 1 person is in charge of food service/meal coordination. Other staff can assist <p>Support for Nursing Mothers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Breastfeeding is encouraged & environment & program policies are designed to support these mothers. <p>Early Learning Guidelines</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All staff have access to the Montana Early Learning Guidelines. <p>Internal Transition Plan</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The program has a documented, appropriate plan for moving children within the program, when applicable. The plan includes the process to assist children, families, & caregivers in moving between rooms. <p>Self Assessment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Director completes self assessment using Program Administration Scale (PAS) AND Environmental Rating Scale • A Quality Improvement Plan is written to address findings, specifically subscales below a 	<p>Health and Safety</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The program uses the STARS Health and Safety Assessment form to document health and safety policies, sanitation practices, food safety, medication administration, and safe sleep practices. • Program safety is documented through the use of STARS Injury/Illness Prevention Checklist <p>Family Style Meal Service</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adults, including program staff and visitors, participate in family style meal service with the children that is developmentally appropriate for the children in care. <p>Immunization</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Program must meet all criteria during the annual County Health Department review to receive the Certificate of Excellence. The Certificate of Excellence is awarded to child care facilities which are found to have all records up-to-date for all children enrolled, and at least 90% of enrolled children up-to-date- with immunization requirements 	<p>Curriculum</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The program has a written curriculum plan that is aligned with the Montana Early Learning Guidelines 0-5 and Developmentally Appropriate Practice (2009, 3rd Ed. By Carol Copple & Sue Bredekamp, Eds). <p>Observations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The program demonstrates that observations of the children and program are used to inform curriculum and environment to support the individual needs of children. <p>Environmental Rating Scale (ERS) Assessment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The program will receive a formal assessment by a STARS assessor with the appropriate ERS scales (ECERS-R and or ITERS-R). • The average facility score must be at least 4.0 overall, along with the following sub scores: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Personal Care Routines: 3.0 or higher - Activities: 4.0 or higher - Listening & Talking: 4.0 or higher - Interactions: 4.0 or higher • The finalized report will inform the Quality Improvement Plan. Any sub scores below 4.0 must be addressed in the Quality Improvement Plan 	<p>High Quality Supportive Environments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NAEYC Accredited • Early Head Start/Head Start Performance Standards (Head Start Programs) <p>Health and Wellness</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The program has established policies addressing the health and wellness of children, staff, and families. <p>Environmental Rating Scale (ERS) Assessment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The program will receive a formal assessment by a STARS assessor with the appropriate ERS scales (ECERS-R and or ITERS-R). • The average facility score must be at least 5.0 overall, along with the following sub scores: Personal Care Routines: 4.0 or higher; Activities: 5.0 or higher; Listening & Talking: 5.0 or higher & Interactions: 5.0 or higher
High Quality Supportive Environments		<p>Immunization Review</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Program has a policy/process in place to ensure routine assessment of all enrolled children's immunization records at least every 6 months. • At each 6 month internal review, the program completes form PHHS-107 for all children who are not up-to-date & conditionally attending or those with medical exemptions. If a provider finds that a child is not up-to-date, they must take one of two action according to the law: Request updated information from the parent to ensure the child is up-to-date; or Complete the conditional enrollment form to ensure the parents are aware the child must be brought up-to-date or they are not in compliance. <p>Pyramid Model: Promoting Social Emotional Competence & School Readiness in Young Children</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All or selected classroom education staff will work to implement Module 1 topics using an evidence-based coaching model. • Pyramid Model tools: <i>Inventory of Practices</i> - related to Module 1 & <i>Pyramid First level, Positive Data Sheet</i>. 	<p>Environment Rating Scale (ERS) Assessment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The program will receive a pre-assessment for the first assessment only at this level, completed by a STARS assessor, with the appropriate ERS Scale (FCCERS-R). • Subscale scores below 3.0 for the pre-assessment must be addressed in the Quality Improvement Plan. • Subsequent assessments will be formal assessment, and programs must receive at least a 3.0 overall, with no sub-scales below a 2.0. <p>Pyramid Model: Promoting Social Emotional Competence & School Readiness in Young Children</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At least 50% of classrooms are working to implement <i>Pyramid Model Module 1 and Module 2</i> using an evidenced coaching model. Suggested Pyramid Models: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Inventory of Practices</i> - sections related to Modules 1 & 2 AND - The first two levels of the Pyramid • Work with an external coach to use <i>Teaching Pyramid Observation Tool</i> (TPOT for Preschool age) or <i>Teaching Pyramid Infant/Toddler Observation Scale</i> (TPITOS) as a guide for coaching and implementation. CCR&R coaches are available. • Director will communicate with families about the Pyramid Model using <i>Positive Solutions for Families</i>. 	<p>Pyramid Model: Promoting Social Emotional Competence & School Readiness in Young Children</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All classrooms will work toward implementation of the Pyramid Model using TPOT & TPITOS results as coaching tools. TPOT/TPITOS scores for primary caregivers indicate progress; review and reflect on Inventory of Practices. Benchmarks of Quality will be used for data-based decision making, moving toward full implementation of the Pyramid Model program-wide. Each primary caregiver and or Director should complete TPOT/TPITOS. The coach may be asked to complete this as well for the program. • Program will identify a Behavior support Team. The Team will lead in developing individualized support plans as needed. • <i>Introduction to the Pyramid Model: Promoting Social Emotional Competence and School Readiness in Young Children</i> will be offered to parents. 	<p>Environmental Rating Scale (ERS) Assessment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The finalized report will inform the Quality Improvement Plan. Any sub scores below 5.0 must be addressed in the Quality Improvement Plan <p>Pyramid Model: Promoting Social Emotional Competence & School Readiness in Young Children</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Pyramid Model will be fully implemented and maintained.

Early Childhood Workforce and Program Incentives

All of the incentives outlined below are designed to support professional development and improve overall program quality in early care and education in Montana for young children and families.

The Practitioner Registry Renewal Awards	Upon completion of consecutive annual renewals 2, 4, 6, 8, and 10 on The Practitioner Registry.	\$100 – for those at Levels 2 and 3 of the Career Path \$200 – for those at Levels 4 and beyond on the Career Path
The Practitioner Registry Achievement Awards: Career Path Levels 4 - 9 (May not receive this and a Renewal Award in the same year)	At each new level achieved individuals receive an award after 12 months of verified employment in a state licensed or registered facility.	\$250 – Level 4 \$500 – Level 5 \$750 – Level 6 \$1000 – Level 7 or 8 \$1250 – Levels 9 & 10 <small>This award has a lifetime maximum of \$1250. (ie. If you received \$500 for Level 5 and later achieved Level 7, you would receive another \$500 award for the maximum of \$1000.)</small>
P.D.I.A. (Professional Development Incentive Awards)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Upon completion of non-college credit approved early childhood training available in 2 tracks. • One-time only award at the Pre-Professional Level on the Career Path 	\$200 - 25 hours \$400 - 50 hours <small>Must verify employment in a licensed or registered facility for a minimum of 15 hours per week.</small>
P.D.I.A. – Higher Education	Upon completion of early childhood college coursework each semester available in 2 options.	\$750 per semester – 6 semester credits or 9 quarter credits \$250 per semester – 2-5 semester credits
Infant /Toddler Course P.D.I.A.	Upon completion of the 60 hour Infant/Toddler Caregiver Education course.	\$500
Infant / Toddler Continuity of Care Stipend (Available only upon completion of above course)	Upon completion of time of direct care of infants and toddlers in the same facility. Employment must be verified and the stipend requires an application.	\$300 after 6 months of longevity \$500 after 1 st year of longevity \$800 after 18 months of longevity
Preschool Course P.D.I.A.	Upon completion of the 60 hour Preschool Teacher Education course.	\$500
Child Development Associate (CDA) Assessment Fee Scholarship	Upon completion of required training and/or education and application for assessment as defined by the Council for Professional Recognition.	\$325 for assessment fee \$50 for renewal of CDA Credential
National Association for Family Child Care (NAFCC) Accreditation Scholarship	To support NAFCC Accreditation fees for Family and Group Child Care Programs not included in the STARS to Quality(with incentives) Field Test	Varies from \$300 - \$500 depending upon step in the accreditation process. \$150 for accreditation renewal
National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) Accreditation Scholarship	To support NAEYC Accreditation fees for Child Care Centers not included in the STARS to Quality(with incentives) Field Test	Pays for full cost of accreditation steps which vary from \$200 - \$775 depending upon size of program.
Mini-Grants to Programs	Application is to local Child Care Resource and Referral Agency. Early Childhood Services Bureau designates priorities.	Determined by Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies. Funding is from the Early Childhood Services Bureau. Up to \$1500 family/group. Up to \$3000 /center

**** This chart gives an overview of each workforce and program incentive and each has more specific eligibility requirements and is dependent on funding. Rev 2/13**



MONTANA STARS TO QUALITY

Field Test Phase I Findings

Executive Summary

Compass Evaluation and Research



December 2012

INTRODUCTION

According to the 2011 American Community Survey census, there are 60,449 children under the age of 5 in Montana. Many of these children live in single parent¹ or dual-parent-working households², making early care and education a necessity³. There are three types of early care and education facilities available for families in Montana who desire and/or need the service: center-based, family home, and group home. Recently, Montana designed and began implementing an initiative to improve the quality of early care and education. This summary report contains details about this initiative and its initial findings.

HIGH QUALITY EARLY LEARNING

The ecological model places a child in the middle of a complex web of relationships and social networks. Ecological theory posits that children are continually shaped and supported by proximal relationships and environments, which in turn are influenced by community, neighborhood, and societal factors. Positive, developmentally appropriate, and stimulating relationships and environments help to ensure a child optimizes development. Supportive communities and neighborhoods help ensure a child's most proximal caregivers have the resources and support they need to provide those relationships and environments.

A child's proximal relationships include parents (or guardians), siblings, grandparents and extended family members. Increasing numbers of families have come to rely on non-familial caregivers to ensure the health and welfare of

young children. Non-familial caregivers may be aligned with the family structure, as in the example of nannies, but for many families, these caregivers are known as early care and education professionals. The early care and education industry (also commonly known as the "child care industry") has come to be an important strut for two societal drivers: a diverse, high-capacity workforce and elementary and secondary education. As regards a diverse and high-capacity workforce (which can drive local and state economic development), the early care and education industry allows both parents within a two-parent household to work or, in the case of single parent households, allows the single parent to work⁴. More recently, the early care and education industry has been recognized as a strut for the educational system, in helping young children (and their families) become prepared to start formal education (i.e., school readiness). The early care and education industry has not always performed well in this last regard, however. The Cost, Quality, and Outcomes studies documented, for example, relatively mediocre quality within the industry. The studies also documented the benefits to children that can occur when higher quality care and education is provided: students in higher quality care exhibited higher language, mathematics, and socio-emotional scores later in elementary school.

QUALITY RATING IMPROVEMENT SYSTEMS

A state must address multiple aspects of the early care and education industry in order to improve and sustain its quality. Key among these are the overall level and focus of professional education and qualifications, the nature and quality of interactions with children, and the quality of the physical environment in which early care and education takes place. Since the 1990s, multiple

¹ 63% of households in Montana are considered family households; 24% of these contain children under the age of 18; 9% of these are female head-of-household. 33% of families in Montana below the poverty line are female head-of-household; 49% of these have children under the age of five.

² 65% of children ages 6 and under have all parents in the household in the labor force

³ 7% of children 3 years and older are enrolled in nursery school or preschool

⁴ The earliest examples of child care for working women can be dated to the 1840s, to care for the children of working class, single women (Scarr, S., & Weinberg, R. (1986). The early childhood enterprise: Care and education of the young. *American Psychologist*, 41, 1140-1141.)

states have invested in improving the quality of early care and education through the implementation of a Quality Rating Improvement System (QRIS). Montana is one of these states. This summary report contains a description of

Montana's QRIS, STARS To Quality, and provides details of the evaluation of Phase I of Montana's QRIS field study.

STARS TO QUALITY FIELD TEST

The STARS To Quality field test relies on existing systems within the state, including:

- Montana's Early Childhood Services Bureau, which administers Montana's early care and education subsidy and scholarship system (Best Beginnings)
- Montana's Child Care Resource and Referral agencies, which provide coaching, technical assistance, and training to early childhood professionals (as well as guidance and assistance to families and communities), and
- The Early Childhood Project, which supports and promotes early care and education professional development.

Field test facilities start in Montana's STARS To Quality QRIS as "Shooting for the STARS" and can advance from 1-STAR up to 5-STARS, which currently is the highest possible rating. To enter and advance within the STARS To Quality system, facilities must document achievement in areas that include (a) education, qualifications and training of staff/caregivers, (b) staff/caregivers-to-child ratio and group size, (c) family & community partnerships, (d) leadership and program management, and (e) environments for care & learning. Thus, to advance in star rating requires attention to multiple and diverse aspects of quality, ranging from the physical environment of early care and education classrooms or spaces, to the nature of relationships between caregiver and child, legal requirements for operation, education and credentials of classroom teachers, and engagement and interactions with families and the community. To investigate the importance of financial support in STARS To Quality advancement, a random sample of facilities were also provided incentives for

advancement; the incentive schedule is shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Quarterly Incentive Schedule⁵

	Family	Group	Small Center	Medium Center	Large Center
STAR 1	Beginner STAR Kit, Resources, Help and Support				
STAR 2	\$625	\$875	\$1250	\$1625	\$2063
	5% increased reimbursement for Best Beginnings Scholarships				
STAR 3	\$938	\$1375	\$1875	\$2500	\$3125
	10% increased reimbursement for Best Beginnings Scholarships				
STAR 4	\$1250	\$1875	\$2500	\$3375	\$4063
	15% increased reimbursement for Best Beginnings Scholarships				
STAR 5	\$1563	\$2250	\$3125	\$4250	\$5000
	20% increased reimbursement for Best Beginnings Scholarships				

Field test participants were drawn from across Montana, grouped into four larger service areas called *quadrants*. The quadrants and some of the cities they contain are listed in Table 2. A total of 98 facilities started the field test; as of September 2012, 20 facilities have discontinued participation.

⁵ Generally, family home facilities provide care and education, within a private residence, to 3-6 children. Group home facilities also are located within private residences and provide care and education to 7-12 children. Small centers are licensed to provide care and education for 13-29 children (or have an average daily attendance of 13-29 children, whichever is less). Similarly, medium centers are licensed to provide care and education for 30-59 children, and large centers are licensed to provide care and education for 60 or more children.

Table 2. Field Test Quadrants

Quadrants	Areas Encompassed in Quadrant
Bozeman	Bozeman, Butte, Helena, Belgrade, Livingstone, Dillon, Deer Lodge
Billings	Billings, Miles City, Glasgow, Sidney, Plentywood, Shepherd, Laurel
Great Falls	Great Falls, Havre, Cut Bank, Choteau, Browning, Lewistown,
Missoula	Missoula, Kalispell, Pablo, Whitefish

As shown in Table 3, 46% (n=45) of original participating facilities were early care and education centers; Figure 1 presents the breakdown of these centers by size. An additional 14% (n=14) of original facilities were early care and education family homes while 40% (n=39) were small group facilities. The Bozeman quadrant represented 24% (n=24) of the sample, while Billings represented 22% (n=22), Great Falls 24%, and Missoula 29% (n=28).

Table 3. Quadrants Represented by Type of Facility

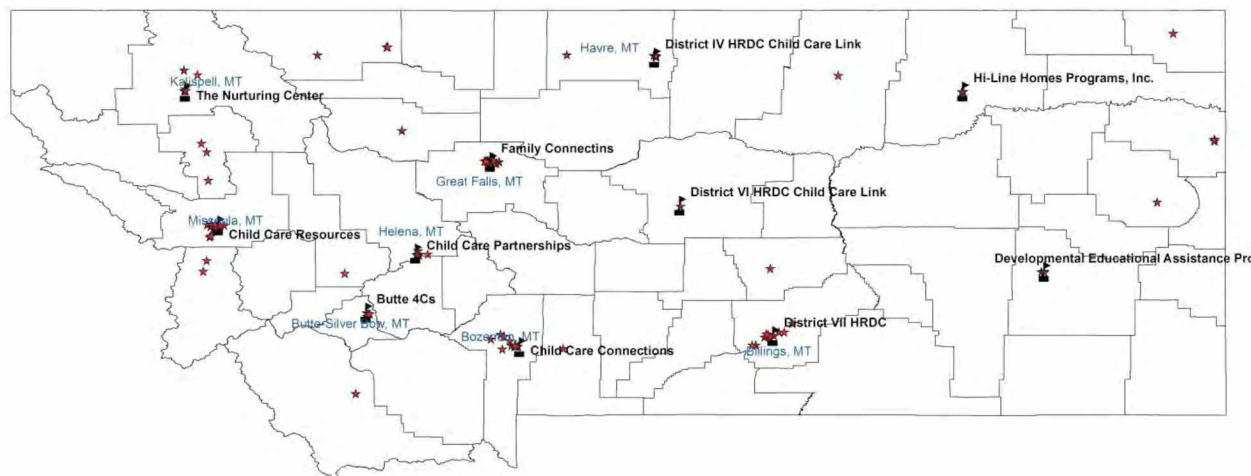
	Center Total	Family Home Facility	Group Home Facility	Grand Total
Bozeman Quadrant	15	0	9	24
Billings Quadrant	7	7	8	22
Great Falls Quadrant	11	3	10	24
Missoula Quadrant	12	4	12	28

Participating facilities are provided with guidance, technical assistance, and training. Each participating facility receives support from a

coach, who is located within one of eleven Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R) agencies around the state. Exhibit 1 presents a map of participating sites and CCR&R agencies (in green). The processes, or steps, that participating sites have completed can be summarized in two categories: Autonomous and Transactional. **Autonomous** processes were carried out by the Early Childhood Services Bureau (ECSB) or by field test participants. **Transactional** processes were carried out **between** the ECSB (and the CCR&R agencies) and participants.

The ECSB's **autonomous** processes included (a) system design, (b) development of policies and procedures, (c) oversight of coaches and mentors, and (d) determination of the number and frequency of trainings and workshops. Field test participants, in contrast, autonomously (a) timed when staff would attend professional development events (i.e., trainings and workshops), (b) timing of application for STARS rating, (c) use of incentives/bonuses, as applicable, and (d) timing of participation and advancement in the Registry.

Transactionally, the field test participants were provided (a) incentives/bonuses, and other materials and resources, as possible, (b) trainings and workshops, (c) individualized coaching and technical assistance, which could occur on site at the facility, and (d) assistance and oversight in developing a quality improvement plan. Field test participants provided to the ECSB (a) applications for STARS rating and (b) data for monitoring and evaluation purposes.

Exhibit 1. Field Test Sites and CCR&R Agencies**FIELD TEST FINDINGS-TO-DATE**

The primary finding is that participating facilities are advancing through the STARS To Quality system. As of September 2012, 19% (n=15) of facilities had achieved a 3-STAR rating, out of a pool of 78 participating facilities. Thirty-eight facilities (49% of active facilities) maintained a 2-STAR rating and 11 facilities (14%) maintained a 1-STAR rating. Thus, the majority (82%) of active field test participants have applied for and received at least 1-STAR in the STARS To Quality system. Further, 68% of facilities have achieved advancement in the system to either a 2- or a 3-STAR status.

Quadrant. As noted earlier, quadrants are service areas that encompass numerous cities and early care and education facilities; there are four quadrants in Montana (see Table 2). When analyzed by quadrant, 40% of **3-STAR** sites are located in the Billings quadrant, followed by 27% in Bozeman and Missoula quadrants. Conversely, the Great Falls quadrant has the highest proportions of 1-STAR and “Shooting for the STARS” facilities.

Table 4: Distribution of Star Rating by Quadrant

	Shooting for the STARS	1- STAR	2-STAR	3-STAR
Bozeman Quadrant	21% n=3	27% n=3	29% n=11	27% n=4
Billings Quadrant	7% n=1	0% n=0	21% n=8	40% n=6
Great Falls Quadrant	43% n=6	55% n=6	24% n=9	7% n=1
Missoula Quadrant	29% n=4	36% n=4	26% n=10	27% n=4
Total	14	11	38	15

Facility Type. When analyzed by facility type, the majority of **3-STAR** sites are centers, followed by small group facilities. Similarly, centers and group facilities are more likely to have 2-STAR ratings, when compared to family home facilities. The emerging finding is that larger sites advance through the star rating system more rapidly.

Table 5: Distribution of Star Rating by Facility Type

	Shooting for the STARS	1- STAR	2-STAR	3-STAR
Center	71% n=10	82% n=9	39% n=15	60% n=9
Family	0% n=0	9% n=1	21% n=8	7% n=1
Group	29% n=4	9% n=1	39% n=15	33% n=5
Total	14	11	38	15

Incentives. When analyzed by the presence or absence of incentive (of any amount), it is striking that only facilities that received an incentive have attained a 3-STAR rating as of September 2012. Further, 95% of facilities with a 2-STAR rating have received an incentive of some amount.

Table 6: Distribution of Star Rating by Incentive

	Shooting for the STARS	1- STAR	2-STAR	3-STAR
Incentive (any amount)		95% n=36	100% n=15	
No Incentive	100% n=14	100% n=11	5% n=2	
Total	14	11	38	15

Further pilot study findings can be organized around the five areas required for STARS To Quality advancement: (1) education, qualifications and training of staff/caregivers, (2) staff/caregivers-to-child ratio and group size, (3) family & community partnerships, (4) leadership and program management, and (5) environments for care & learning.

EDUCATION, QUALIFICATIONS, AND TRAINING

There are several thousand early care and education professionals in Montana. One of the most important contributions of the STARS To Quality initiative is its focus on the education and credentialing of these professionals above and beyond what is required by state licensing

standards⁶. As shown in Table 7, which reflects data from the Registry database, between September 2011 and September 2012 there was a 42% increase in the number of field test providers with Associates and Bachelor degrees. There was a 29% increase in the number of providers with some college and an 18% increase in the number of providers with Masters degrees.

Table 7: Education and Credentials Among Field Test Providers

	September 2011	September 2012	Change
Associates Degree	N=53	N=75	42%
Bachelors	N=131	N=186	42%
Masters	N=11	N=13	18%
Some College	N=103	N=133	29%
CDA			
Infant/Toddler	N=23	N=28	22%
Preschool	N=31	N=38	23%
Family Child Care	N=9	N=9	0%
Apprentice Certificate	N=55	N=30	(45%)

When compared to non-field test providers, the field test group has slightly more providers with some college completion (Table 8). On average, however, the non-field test sites have slightly higher proportions of degree-bearing staff while the field test providers have higher proportions of staff with degrees in early childhood education or related fields.

⁶ Montana's licensing standards require center staff (who work more than 160 hours per year) to (a) be at least 18 years of age, (b) have at least two years experience in a licensed/registered facility, (c) have completed First Aid/CPR training, and (d) to accrue at least 8 hours of training annually. Center directors must have a Bachelor's degree in a related field plus either one year of experience or a CDA certificate. Center directors also may qualify by having three or more years of experience in a licensed or registered facility. Center directors must earn at least 15 hours of approved education and/or training annually, as well as comply with other licensing requirements.

Table 8: Degree Accrual in Field Test and non-Field Test Sites with Data in the Registry

	Field test providers (n=770)	Non-Field test providers (n=1652)
Associates	10% (n=75)	16% (n=260)
Early Childhood Education	N=54 or 72% of providers with two year degrees	N=116 or 45% of providers with two year degrees
Bachelors	24% (n=186)	36% (n=588)
Early Childhood Education	N=30 or 16% of providers with four year degrees	N=68 or 12% of providers with four year degrees
Masters	2% (n=13)	6% (n=105)
Early Childhood Education	N=2 or 15% of providers with Masters degrees	N=9 or 9% of providers with Masters degrees
Some College	17% (n=133)	14% (n=237)
CDA	10% (n=75)	6% (n=96)
Apprenticeships	4% (n=30)	3% (n=46)

The Registry helps facilities sort staff according to level, where Level P indicates basic knowledge and skill attainment and Level 9 is the highest level of knowledge/skill attainment. As shown in Table 9, field test site participants are generally more advanced than total Registry participants in Levels 2, 4 and 5. This reinforces the finding that field test participants are making gains in training and credentialing beyond the high school diploma as well as in two-year degrees.

Table 9: Registry Career Level Attainment across Field Test Sites (as of September 2012)

Level	Field Test Only	All Registry
	%	%
	N=770	N=3375
Level P (8 hours training, CPR, First Aid, EC employment)	16% (n=124)	21% (n=717)
Level 1 (HS diploma or GED, 15 hours training, CPR, First Aid, 500 hours EC experience)	8% (n=64)	12% (n=406)
Level 2 (HS diploma or GED, 60 hours training in the past 5 years, CPR, First Aid, 500 hours EC experience)	37% (n=287)	34% (n=1147)
Level 3 (CDA credential or NAFCC accreditation, 1000 hours EC experience, Individual membership in a professional EC organization)	8% (n=58)	8% (n=261)
Level 4 (CDA w/ 20 EC credits, Apprenticeship Certificate or 30 credit EC Certificate, 1000 hours EC experience, individual membership in a professional EC organization)	5% (n=35)	4% (n=144)
Level 5 (Associate's Degree w/ 20 EC credits, 300 hours supervised experience, 1000 hours EC experience, individual membership in a professional organization)	6% (n=44)	5% (n=181)
Level 6 (Bachelor's Degree w/ 20 EC credits, 300 hours supervised experience, 1000 hours EC experience, individual membership in a professional EC organization)	8% (n=59)	10% (n=343)
Level 7 (Bachelor's Degree in EC, 300 hours supervised experience, 1000 hours EC experience, individual membership in a professional EC organization)	4% (n=31)	4% (n=124)
Level 8 (Master's Degree in EC or related field, 1000 hours EC experience, individual membership in a professional organization)	<1% (n=5)	1% (n=49)
Level 9 (Doctorate in EC or related field, 1000 hours EC experience, individual membership in a professional EC organization)	--	0% (n=3)

RATIOS AND GROUP SIZE

Caregiver to child ratios are dictated first by licensing standards and then by STAR level. To achieve a higher STAR rating, the facility has to document the designated ratio for the type of site and age of child. For **centers** that are in the Shooting for the STARS category through the 3-STAR rating categories, the caregiver: child ratios are 1:4 for infants, 1:8 for toddlers, and 1:10 for preschool-aged children. When **centers** apply for a 4- or 5-STAR rating, the site must demonstrate compliance with National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) or Head Start Performance Standards. The NAEYC standards for caregiver: child ratios are based upon child age and total group size⁷ and range from 1:3 for infants to 1:10 for four and five year old children.

Family home and group home facilities that are in the Shooting for the STARS and 1-STAR categories must meet Montana licensing requirements of a 1:6 caregiver: child ratio. Sites that apply for a 2-, 3-, or 4-STAR rating must meet the following ratio criteria:

- At least 2 caregivers caring for children at all times when there are more than 6 children present at the home.
- No more than six infants in a group home or three infants in a family home at any time, unless care is provided for infants only.
- In infant only (ages 0-24 months) facilities, ratio's range from no more than 4 infants at one time in family home facilities to 8 infants at one time in a group facility.

Family home and group home facilities that wish to achieve a 5-STAR rating must be accredited by the National Association for Family Child Care.

⁷ For more information:
http://www.naeyc.org/files/academy/file/Teacher-Child_Ratio_Chart_9_16_08.pdf

FAMILY AND COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

Each participating facility must demonstrate compliance with expectations for family and community engagement, which vary by star rating. Facilities that are "Shooting for the STARS" or have a 1-STAR rating must meet Montana licensing requirements. Sites that progress to a 2-STAR or higher rating must meet additional requirements, as shown in Table 10.

Table 10: Criteria for Family and Community Partnerships Beyond a 1-STAR Rating

Prior STAR-level requirements, plus	
2-STAR	Enrollment process that ensures information exchange; establish a contract for services
3-STAR	Families receive information regarding community resources; transition assistance; opportunities for involvement
4-STAR	Parent-teacher conferences at least annual; multiple opportunities for regular exchange of information; referrals to community agencies and resources for families
5-STAR	Site meets NAEYC Accredited/Head Start Performance Standards or is NAFCC accredited, as applicable

LEADERSHIP AND PROGRAM MANAGEMENT

Field test facilities must (a) participate in trainings for program administrators and staff, and (b) enroll in and maintain enrollment in the Registry, a database of provider educational achievements and credentials. Field test facilities also must maintain an Emergency Preparedness Plan. To progress to a 2-STAR rating or higher, a facility must be trained on and then rated using the Program Administration Scale (PAS) or Business Administration Scale (BAS). To achieve a 3-STAR rating, the site's overall score on the PAS or BAS must be a 3.0 or higher. To achieve a 4-STAR rating, the overall score must be 5.0 or higher. To achieve a 5-STAR the overall rating must be a 5.25 or higher and the site must be NAEYC or NAFCC accredited (or meet Head Start Performance Standards). Currently there are data on 11 centers (which use the Program Administration Scale) and 13 family

home/group facilities (which use the Business Administration Scale). Scores range from 1 to 7 points, with 7 indicating the highest level of performance on the scale. As shown, centers are performing well in child assessments, fiscal management, family partnerships, marketing & public relations, and use of technology. Family home and group facilities are performing well in work environment, recordkeeping, and provider-parent communication. (Note, several areas were not rated in the PAS and BAS, to reduce duplication of efforts with the Registry, etc. These areas are noted in Tables 11 and 12).

Table 11: Program Administration Scale Findings

	Program Administration Scale
Human Resource Development	4.6
Personnel Cost & Allocation	4.1
Center Operations	4.5
Child Assessment	5.4
Fiscal Management	5.1
Program Planning & Evaluation	3.7
Family Partnerships	5.9
Marketing & Public Relations	5.4
Technology	6.3
Staff Qualifications	unrated

Table 12: Business Administration Scale Findings

	Business Administration Scale
Qualifications & Professional Development	unrated
Income & Benefits	2.7
Work Environment	6.2
Fiscal Management	4.2
Recordkeeping	5.5
Risk Management	2.4
Provider-Parent Communication	5.5
Community Resources	unrated
Marketing & Public Relations	4.9
Provider as Employer	2.7

ENVIRONMENTS FOR CARE AND LEARNING

Environment rating scale scores provide insight into how program quality changes over time, using a seven point scale to measure quality with regard to space and furnishings, personal care, routines, language and reasoning activities, activities, interactions, program structures, and parent and staff considerations. Field test facilities were assessed for baseline quality in fall 2010. Each participating site received at least one classroom pre-assessment using the appropriate Environment Rating Scale (i.e., the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale, the Infant-Toddler Environment Rating Scale, or the Family Day Care Environment Rating Scale).

As shown in Table 13, pre-assessment differences in ERS score were evident in baseline assessments. More specifically, there were significant differences (i.e., differences that, with a high degree of confidence, could not be assigned to chance) on (a) overall ERS score; (b) space and furnishings; (c) personal care; (d) program structure (schedule, play time and group time activities, provisions for children with disabilities); and (e) parents and staff/provider communication and development.

At the time baseline assessments were conducted, the primary differences among quadrants include regional Resource and Referral resources, presence and geographic location of universities or colleges and other training opportunities, and regional economies. Sites in the Billings quadrant generally had the highest scores, with the exception of subscale scores in Parents and Staff/Provider Development. Sites in the Great Falls quadrant tended to have the lowest scores, including low scores in Space and Furnishings, Language and Talking, Activities, Program Structure, and Parents and Staff/Provider.

Table 13: Baseline ERS Assessments by Quadrant

	Bozeman	Billings	Missoula	Great Falls
Overall Score	2.97	3.23	2.79	2.7
Space and Furnishings	2.55	2.89	2.38	2.38
Personal Care Routines	1.64	2.13	1.41	1.67
Language/ Reasoning	3.27	3.57	3.34	3.15
Activities	2.6	2.74	2.45	2.15
Interaction	2.91	3.9	3.1	2.95
Program Structure	2.32	3.19	2.79	2.21
Parents and Staff	5.63	5.01	4.95	4.94

Baseline assessments, when disaggregated by type of facility (Table 14), revealed significant differences in (a) overall score; (b) activities; and (c) program structure. It is difficult to interpret, with accuracy, why such significant differences would occur prior to significant program services. In almost all sub-scales, group facilities achieved the lowest scores.

Table 14. Baseline Assessments Disaggregated by Facility Type

	Center	Home	Group
Overall Score	3.05	2.91	2.57
Space and Furnishings	2.56	2.55	2.44
Personal Care Routines	1.68	1.89	1.6
Language/ Reasoning	3.4	3.86	2.99
Activities	2.64	2.4	2.15
Interaction	3.34	3.65	2.67
Program Structure	2.8	2.86	2.11
Parents and Staff	5.11	4.9	5.29

CHANGE IN ERS SCORES

As can be seen in Table 15, among facilities that achieved a 3-STAR rating and Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale pre- and post-assessments, the greatest environmental gains were experienced in program structure, followed by gains in language and reasoning. Among sites that received pre- and post-Infant-Toddler Environment Rating Scale assessments, the greatest gains were activities, followed by gains in language and reasoning. Finally, among sites that received Family Child Care Environment Rating Scale pre- and post-assessments, the greatest gains were realized in activities and program structure. The last sub-scale in the series was not rated as a “post-assessment” because facilities implemented the Program Administration Scale or Business Administration Scale instead.

Table 15: Change in Environment Rating Scale Scores over Time

Type and Number of Assessments		Overall Score	Space and Furnishings	Personal Care Routines (Health and Safety)	Language/ Talking/ Listening/ Reasoning	Activities	Interaction	Program Structure	Parents and Staff/ Provider/ Staff Development
ECERS	Pre (n=10)	3.49	3.02	1.76	4	3.26	3.59	3.34	6.09
	Post (n=10)	4.49	4	2.81	5.73	4.97	4.62	5.7	unrated
	Change	1	.98	1.05	1.73	1.71	1.03	2.36	--
ITERS	Pre (n=4)	3.56	2.6	1.96	4	2.42	4.94	2.92	6.07
	Post (n=4)	4.53	4	2.96	5.92	4.9	5.5	4.75	unrated
	Change	.97	1.4	1	1.92	2.48	.56	1.83	--
FCCERS	Pre (n=4)	2.83	2.54	1.96	3.17	2.43	2.31	1.96	6.56
	Post (n=4)	3.81	3.96	3	4.17	4.26	3.5	3.67	unrated
	Change	.98	1.42	1.04	1	1.83	1.19	1.71	--

WHAT MAKES A DIFFERENCE?

According to facility directors, the elements most effective for improving quality included:

- Professional development
- Ongoing training and education
- Training in and adherence to national standards such as NAEYC/NAFCC/Head Start Performance Standards
- Training and use of Environment Rating Scales and related resources
- Learning and developing teaching strategies and strategies for focusing on the caregiver-child relationship
- State rules, regulations, and resources
- Staff incentives
- STARS guidelines
- Use of high quality materials and resources

Through interviews with facility directors, staff, and coaches as well as the analysis of quantitative data used to determine star rating and system progress, two system elements stand out as **statistically significant** for star rating advancement: the presence and use of incentives and technical assistance and coaching.

INCENTIVES

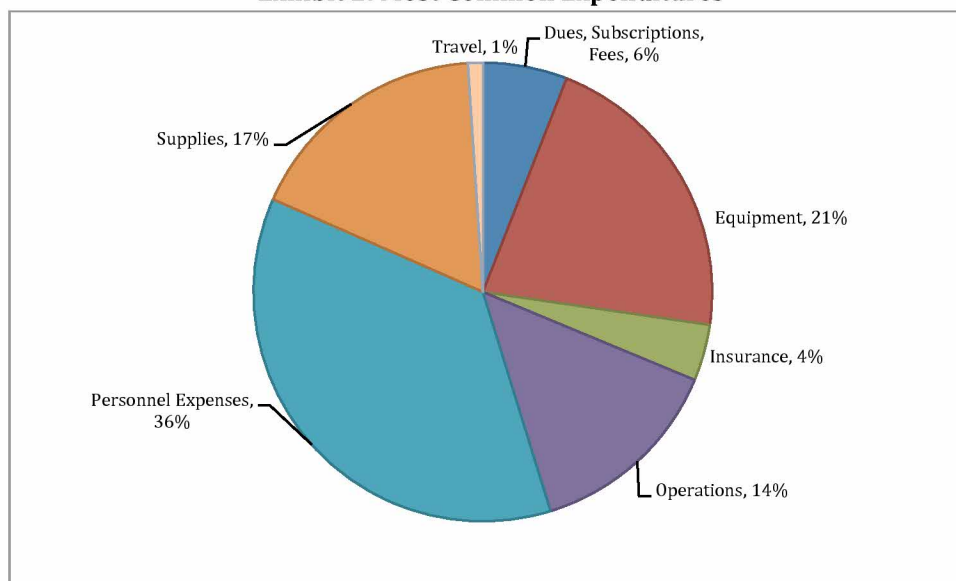
Fiscal investments may be the single strongest predictor of star rating. Fiscal investments reflect incentives that are spent on facility needs, per the facility's plan for improving (and maintaining) high quality early learning services. Investments are spread across different operational areas, including personnel training and professional development, facility and classroom supplies, dues and subscriptions, operational expenses, insurance and equipment, and outdoor equipment. As of November 2012, over \$525,000

total has been invested in facility incentives. The most common expenditures are illustrated below.

Table 16: Common Incentive Expenditures

	Total Dollar Amount	Average Amount
Dues, Subscriptions, Fees	\$ 27,967	\$ 874
Equipment	\$ 100,287	\$ 3,039
Insurance	\$ 18,654	\$ 982
Operations	\$ 65,614	\$ 3,068
Personnel Expenses	\$ 170,966	\$ 4,170
Supplies	\$ 81,456	\$ 2,396
Travel	\$ 4,912	\$ 546

Personnel expenses (commonly expenses related to STARS trainings, ongoing education, and bonuses), equipment, and supplies account for the majority (74%) of the most common expenditures. These areas reflect necessary improvements or upgrades to staff qualifications and materials needed for day-to-day operation of high quality early learning environments. Operational costs accounted for 14% of the most common expenditures, while dues, subscriptions, and fees, insurance, and travel accounted for most of the balance (10%). In addition, the items that accounted for the highest average dollar value in expenditures (i.e., "major" expenditures) include improvements to outdoor environments, personnel benefits, personnel expenses, and furnishings, followed by equipment (note, not all of these "major" expenses were common across facilities. Thus, expenses for outdoor learning environments, benefits, and furnishings are not represented in Table 16 and Exhibit 2).

Exhibit 2: Most Common Expenditures

COACHING AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

Technical assistance was provided by means of telephone, email, on-site coaching (modeling and mentoring as well as direct information transfer), group coaching, observation, and office visits. Topics included (1) licensing information and requirements, (2) education, qualifications, and training, (3) staff: child ratios and group size, (4) family and community partnerships, (5) leadership and program management, (6) environments for care and learning, (7) required trainings, and other topics as necessary and appropriate.

On average, between June 2011 and August 2012, sites received 7 telephone visits, 5 email visits, 9 on-site coaching visits, and fewer than one (on average) of the remaining modes of technical assistance. Similarly, the most frequently addressed topics were environments for care and

learning (average of 5 visits per site between June 2011 and August 2012) and required trainings (average of 6 visits per site in this time period).

What appears to be significant with regard to coaching is the total time spent supporting individual facilities. More specifically, total visit minutes and total session preparation and follow up minutes are significant predictors of star rating. The distance between coaches and facilities can be a challenge in that some facilities require multiple hours of travel. Delivering on-site modeling and mentoring of high quality practices as well as generalized support and technical assistance then requires coaches to arrange multi-day trips. From provider coaching logs, the average mileage traversed between June 2011 and August 2012 was 266 miles, with a range from 0 miles to a cumulative 3765 miles for one individual facility.

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

The primary finding is that **participating field test facilities are advancing relatively quickly through the STARS to Quality tiered rating system.** In fact, as of late December 2012, a participating facility achieved the state's first 4-STAR rating. This rapid progress can be attributed to several factors, including:

(1) Commitment to improving staff education.

Participating facilities cannot advance unless staff complete the required trainings and, in many cases, advance their education. A facility's ability to make progress in education and credentials represents a significant commitment by the facility director/owner and participating staff to make time for and invest in ongoing training and coursework.

(2) Financial support. The commitment to improving and maintaining quality carries a significant financial burden. The availability of incentives and financial support is critical to ensuring participating facilities have an adequately prepared staff. Some, but not all, participating facilities receive incentives that can be used to offset these costs.

(3) Low turnover. Relatively low rates of turnover among staff allows facilities to maintain a course of improvement. (To wit, every time a staff person is replaced, the facility may have to "reset" its training for that staff person, an investment of time and money.) As the STARS to Quality initiative moves forward, facilities and their support team(s) will have to strategize how to maintain these staff, especially staff that have achieved degrees and credentials. This is an area in which incentives (or other forms of financial support) may play a defining role: facilities that provide benefits and competitive compensation packages may experience lower turnover of their most experienced and educated staff.

(4) Coaching. The CCR&R coaches establish a personal relationship with participating facilities and help facilities strategize and invest in quality improvements. This personal relationship, which involves on-site visits and

technical assistance at participating facilities (and is a significant investment by coaches), can be a critical factor in motivating and assisting an individual facility to make progress on its improvement plan.

The "True" Cost of High Quality Early Care and Education

As the STARS to Quality initiative moves forward, it will be important to determine the "true" cost of quality care. In many states the market price (i.e., the monthly cost of a child's enrollment) of early care and education does not equal the actual cost of higher quality care—facilities that have a higher star rating also tend to have higher operating costs due to (a) higher salaries and competitive compensation for experienced and qualified staff and (b) ongoing investments in training and professional development, as well as (c) other factors associated with quality such as use of validated curricula, membership and participation in professional associations, etc.. Many high quality providers cannot afford to maintain high quality without additional financial supports. Montana's STARS to Quality initiative leverages Child Care Development Block Grant subsidy funds to complement the tiered quality rating system by providing a higher reimbursement rate for a higher quality rating; eligible children enrolled in 5-STAR facilities can receive a 20% higher Best Beginnings scholarship, for example. As shown in the analysis of incentives expenditures, a large proportion of costs related to improving quality are personnel expenses related to training. Further, we can expect that a large proportion of costs related to maintaining high quality also will be personnel expenses, related to competitive compensation packages that may contribute to low turnover.

Montana is not building a program, it is building a system of early care and education. Systems have multiple moving parts--in Montana's case, these moving parts represent myriad contributions from at least three partners: Early Childhood Services Bureau, Child Care Resource and Referral

agencies, and the Early Childhood Project. Adequate funding of the different system elements (such as Best Beginnings Scholarships, quality incentives, the Registry, and coaching) is essential for the health and ability of the system to facilitate a positive return on its investments. An efficient and effective systems approach will leverage the resources and expertise that exist across these agencies to achieve uniform, cohesive outcomes not only for young children but for families and communities and other systems such as public education, public health, and human and social services. School readiness is one example of a positive outcome experienced by multiple stakeholders. As the STARS to Quality initiative moves forward, we will seek out additional system outcomes and their impact on stakeholders across the state.

LICENSING INDICATOR SYSTEMS¹

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of a licensing indicator system is to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of an existing licensing system by refocusing the emphasis of the licensing process. A licensing indicator system is intended to complement, and not replace, an existing licensing measurement system.

Through use of the licensing indicator system, less time is spent conducting annual inspections of facilities with a history of high compliance with the licensing rules, and more time is spent a) providing technical assistance to help facilities comply with licensing rules and b) conducting additional inspections of facilities and agencies with low compliance with licensing rules.

The licensing indicator system is actually a shortened version of a comprehensive licensing inspection instrument. A small number of rules are selected based upon a statistical methodology designed for this specific purpose. The licensing indicator system uses a measurement tool, designed to measure compliance with a smaller number of rules, but that predicts high compliance with **all** the rules. If a facility is in complete compliance with all of the rules measured in the licensing indicator system, high compliance with all the rules is statistically predicted. It is critical to understand that the rules for the licensing indicator system are research-based, selected statistically, and not based upon value judgment or arbitrary assignment, risk assessment or frequent rule violations. Moreover, the system has been used for over 30 years, successfully implemented in several states, and applied to different human-care licensing programs – in short, it is time-tested and proven to be more than adequate in consumer protection.

PREREQUISITES FOR IMPLEMENTING A LICENSING INDICATOR SYSTEM

Before developing and implementing a licensing indicator system, it is important that the existing licensing system is comprehensive and well established. The following are prerequisites to implementation of an indicator system:

- Licensing rules must be comprehensive, well written and measurable. Rules are the building blocks for any licensing system.
- There must be a measurement tool designed to standardize the application and interpretation of the rules. A licensing inspection instrument designed to assure statewide consistency in the application of the rules is essential prior to implementing a licensing indicator system.
- At least one year of data on rule violations for individual facilities. These data are needed to enter into the computer software system in order to determine the rules that are the indicators or predictors of high compliance.

HOW TO DEVELOP A LICENSING INDICATOR SYSTEM

The basic steps to developing a licensing indicator system include:

- Selecting a sample or population of regulated settings to determine the indicators. If using a sample, the sample should be appropriately stratified to reflect the general population by considering setting size, geographic area, profit status, and ownership types.
- Tabulating violation data of the sample or population for analysis.
- Establishing the criteria for “compliant” and “non-compliant” settings.
- Determining the strength of association between rules that are violated in non-compliant settings and complied with in compliant settings, and selecting the rules with the strongest associations as key indicators.
- Adding a small number of additional rules that are determined based on a licensing weighting system or known risk to the statistically selected indicators.²
- Adding a random selection of rules to the statistically selected and high-risk indicators.

The final licensing indicator system instrument contains the indicator rules, high-risk rules and random rules. The total number of rules on an indicator checklist will vary, but will range from 20-45 items.

¹ Summarized from Measurement Tools and Systems – Chapter 11 of the NARA LICENSING CURRICULUM, by Richard Fiene and Karen Kroh.

² The purpose of this step is to assure face validity of the instrument.

CRITERIA FOR USE OF THE LICENSING INDICATOR SYSTEM

The development of very specific criteria for use of the licensing indicator system is perhaps the most critical step of the design process. This is the step at which the determinations are made as to when the licensing indicator system will be used. The determination of use of the system should be standardized and not based upon licensing inspector discretion. Each licensing agency must develop its own criteria based upon its own historical licensing data and experience. Following are some criteria that have been successfully applied:

- The setting has had a full or regular license with no negative sanctions for the previous two (2) years.
- All previous violations have been corrected according to the setting's plan of correction.
- No significant, validated complaints have been made against the setting within the past year.
- The total number of consumers served has not increased by more than a specified percentage within the past year.
- A full inspection using the comprehensive licensing measurement instrument must be done at least every three (3) years.

REVISION OF THE LICENSING INDICATOR SYSTEM

The licensing indicator system should be continually reevaluated for its effectiveness. The system should be completely revised at least every three years or upon a revision of the rules. In order to achieve the intended purpose of the licensing indicator system of refocusing the emphasis of licensing effort from facilities with high compliance to facilities with low compliance, constant review, evaluation and revision of the licensing indicator system is essential.

BALANCE BETWEEN COMPLIANCE AND PROGRAM QUALITY

An increased emphasis and concern for program quality is a difficult area to address for licensing agencies. The resources to complete program quality reviews and to advocate for quality within government are not commensurate with the expectations. However, there are some strategies that can be employed to assist licensing agencies. The first and foremost will be to save time on doing licensing inspections. The indicator system described here will provide such a tool for saving time. Studies conducted over the past two decades indicate that utilizing an indicator checklist approach saves up to 50% in the on-site inspection time. This frees up time for conducting additional inspections in new or problem facilities, to provide technical assistance, or to complete program quality reviews.

DEFINITIONS

Instrument Based Program Monitoring | A movement within licensing and regulatory administration from qualitative measurement to a very quantitative form of measurement that includes the use of checklists.

Indicator System | A licensing measurement system utilizing a shortened version of a comprehensive checklist measuring compliance with rules through a statistical methodology. Only key predictor rules are included on an indicator checklist. It is a form of inferential inspections where only a portion of the full set of rules is measured.

Inferential Inspections | An abbreviated inspection utilizing a select set of rules to be reviewed. An indicator system, weighting of rules for determining a shortened inspection tool, a random selection of rules, etc. are examples of

inferential inspections. Use of inferential inspections was developed as a time saving technique and a way to focus regulatory efforts on facilities that required additional inspections or technical assistance.

Checklist | A simple measurement tool that measures compliance with state rules in a yes/no format. Either the facility is in compliance with rules or not in compliance. Generally, there is no partial compliance with checklists.

REFERENCE

Griffin and Fiene. "A systematic approach to child care regulatory review, policy evaluation and planning to promote health and safety of children in child care: A manual for state and local child care and maternal and child health agency staff." *Zero to Three*. The National Center for Clinical Infant Programs, 1995.

Montana Child Care Sliding Fee Scale - Effective 08-01-2013

The monthly co-payment is a percentage of the family's gross monthly income (GMI).

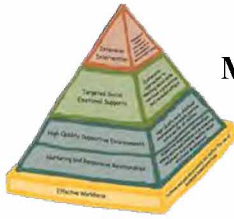
FAMILY SIZE >	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
Base Co-pay	\$10	\$10	\$10	\$10	\$10	\$10	\$10	\$10	\$10	\$10	\$10	\$10	\$10	\$10	\$10
TANF GMI + \$1	\$704	\$885	\$1,067	\$1,250	\$1,431	\$1,612	\$1,794	\$1,975	\$2,156	\$2,338	\$2,519	\$2,700	\$2,881	\$3,063	\$3,246
1% Co-pay	\$10	\$10	\$11	\$13	\$14	\$16	\$18	\$20	\$22	\$23	\$25	\$27	\$29	\$31	\$32
90% FPG GMI	\$1,135	\$1,432	\$1,729	\$2,026	\$2,323	\$2,620	\$2,917	\$3,214	\$3,511	\$3,808	\$4,105	\$4,402	\$4,699	\$4,996	\$5,293
2% Co-pay	\$23	\$29	\$35	\$41	\$46	\$52	\$58	\$64	\$70	\$76	\$82	\$88	\$94	\$100	\$106
95% FPG GMI	\$1,198	\$1,511	\$1,825	\$2,138	\$2,452	\$2,765	\$3,079	\$3,392	\$3,706	\$4,019	\$4,333	\$4,646	\$4,960	\$5,273	\$5,587
3% Co-pay	\$36	\$45	\$55	\$64	\$74	\$83	\$92	\$102	\$111	\$121	\$130	\$139	\$149	\$158	\$168
100% FPG GMI	\$1,261	\$1,591	\$1,921	\$2,251	\$2,581	\$2,911	\$3,241	\$3,571	\$3,901	\$4,231	\$4,561	\$4,891	\$5,221	\$5,551	\$5,881
4% Co-pay	\$50	\$64	\$77	\$90	\$103	\$116	\$130	\$143	\$156	\$169	\$182	\$196	\$209	\$222	\$235
105% FPG GMI	\$1,324	\$1,670	\$2,017	\$2,363	\$2,710	\$3,056	\$3,403	\$3,749	\$4,096	\$4,442	\$4,789	\$5,135	\$5,482	\$5,828	\$6,175
5% Co-pay	\$66	\$84	\$101	\$118	\$136	\$153	\$170	\$187	\$205	\$222	\$239	\$257	\$274	\$291	\$309
110% FPG GMI	\$1,387	\$1,750	\$2,113	\$2,476	\$2,839	\$3,202	\$3,565	\$3,928	\$4,291	\$4,654	\$5,017	\$5,380	\$5,743	\$6,106	\$6,469
6% Co-pay	\$83	\$105	\$127	\$149	\$170	\$192	\$214	\$236	\$257	\$279	\$301	\$323	\$345	\$366	\$388
115% FPG GMI	\$1,450	\$1,829	\$2,209	\$2,588	\$2,968	\$3,347	\$3,727	\$4,106	\$4,486	\$4,865	\$5,245	\$5,624	\$6,004	\$6,383	\$6,763
7% Co-pay	\$102	\$128	\$155	\$181	\$208	\$234	\$261	\$287	\$314	\$341	\$367	\$394	\$420	\$447	\$473
120% FPG GMI	\$1,513	\$1,909	\$2,305	\$2,701	\$3,097	\$3,493	\$3,889	\$4,285	\$4,681	\$5,077	\$5,473	\$5,869	\$6,265	\$6,661	\$7,057
8% Co-pay	\$121	\$153	\$184	\$216	\$248	\$279	\$311	\$343	\$374	\$406	\$438	\$470	\$501	\$533	\$565
125% FPG GMI	\$1,576	\$1,989	\$2,401	\$2,814	\$3,226	\$3,639	\$4,051	\$4,464	\$4,876	\$5,289	\$5,701	\$6,114	\$6,526	\$6,939	\$7,351
9% Co-pay	\$142	\$179	\$216	\$253	\$290	\$328	\$365	\$402	\$439	\$476	\$513	\$550	\$587	\$625	\$662
130% FPG GMI	\$1,639	\$2,068	\$2,497	\$2,926	\$3,355	\$3,784	\$4,213	\$4,642	\$5,071	\$5,500	\$5,929	\$6,358	\$6,787	\$7,216	\$7,645
10% Co-pay	\$164	\$207	\$250	\$293	\$336	\$378	\$421	\$464	\$507	\$550	\$593	\$636	\$679	\$722	\$765
135% FPG GMI	\$1,702	\$2,148	\$2,593	\$3,039	\$3,484	\$3,930	\$4,375	\$4,821	\$5,266	\$5,712	\$6,157	\$6,603	\$7,048	\$7,494	\$7,939
11% Co-pay	\$187	\$236	\$285	\$334	\$383	\$432	\$481	\$530	\$579	\$628	\$677	\$726	\$775	\$824	\$873
140% FPG GMI	\$1,765	\$2,227	\$2,689	\$3,151	\$3,613	\$4,075	\$4,537	\$4,999	\$5,461	\$5,923	\$6,385	\$6,847	\$7,309	\$7,771	\$8,233
12% Co-pay	\$212	\$267	\$323	\$378	\$434	\$489	\$544	\$600	\$655	\$711	\$766	\$822	\$877	\$933	\$988
145% FPG GMI	\$1,828	\$2,307	\$2,785	\$3,264	\$3,742	\$4,221	\$4,699	\$5,178	\$5,656	\$6,135	\$6,613	\$7,092	\$7,570	\$8,049	\$8,527
13% Co-pay	\$238	\$300	\$362	\$424	\$486	\$549	\$611	\$673	\$735	\$798	\$860	\$922	\$984	\$1,046	\$1,109
150% FPG GMI	\$1,891	\$2,386	\$2,881	\$3,376	\$3,871	\$4,366	\$4,861	\$5,356	\$5,851	\$6,346	\$6,841	\$7,336	\$7,831	\$8,326	\$8,821
14% Co-pay	\$265	\$334	\$403	\$473	\$542	\$611	\$681	\$750	\$819	\$888	\$958	\$1,027	\$1,096	\$1,166	\$1,235

Total Monthly Co-payment = Gross Monthly Income (GMI) x the percentage assigned to the income range, which is based on Federal Poverty Guidelines (FPG) or \$10, whichever is greater.

The co-payments listed are minimums and correspond to the lowest level for each income range.

Sliding Fee Scale based on 2012 Federal Poverty Guidelines (Federal Register / Vol. 77, No. 17 / Thursday, January 26, 2012 / Notices)

Attachment 1: Montana Pyramid Model Partnership



Montana Pyramid Model Partnership for Supporting Young Children and Families

Pyramid Model Overview: The Center on the Social Emotional Foundations for Early Learning developed a conceptual model of evidenced-based practices for promoting young children's, birth to age five, social emotional competence through prevention practices that address challenging behavior. This model is referred to as the Pyramid Model for supporting social emotional competence. Based on several years of evaluation data, the Pyramid Model is a sound framework for early care and education systems.

Montana Pyramid Model Partners:

- Department of Public Health & Human Services: Human & Community Services Division—Early Childhood Services Bureau, Head Start Collaboration Office; Child & Family Services Division—MT Children's Trust Fund; Disability Services Division—Children's Mental Health Bureau, Part C Early Intervention; Public Health & Safety Division—Family & Community Health Bureau, Maternal & Child Health Home Visiting Program
- Montana Head Start and Early Head Start programs, both tribal and non-tribal
- The Early Childhood Project
- The Office of Public Instruction
- Montana Child Care Resource and Referral Network
- Early Childhood Mental Health Service Providers

Our Vision: All Montana early childhood practitioners in partnership with families will have the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and supports necessary to nurture young children's social-emotional development within their family, culture, and community.

Our Mission: The Montana Pyramid Model Partnership assists in developing, evaluating, and sustaining, a statewide, collaborative professional development infrastructure that utilizes the Pyramid Model as a conceptual framework. The integration of the Pyramid Model with other related **promotion, prevention, and intervention** efforts assures Montana practitioners educated in the Pyramid Model will have the capacity to promote social emotional competence, prevent emotional disruption, address challenging behavior and understand the impact of nurturing relationships on children's capacity to learn.

The Goals:

1. Coordinate the Pyramid Model statewide
2. Increase the number of high quality trainers and coaches
3. Community level investment in the Pyramid Model

The Results:

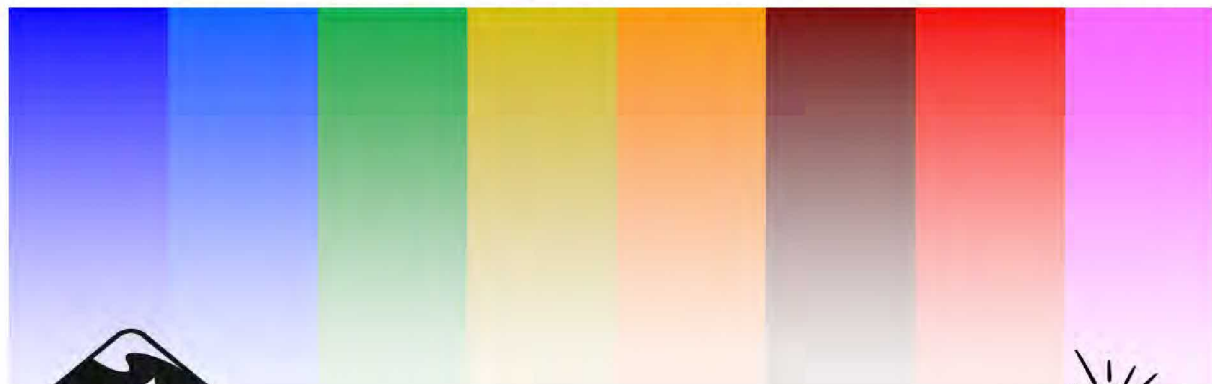
- ❖ Trained and coached early childhood practitioners
- ❖ All agencies include the Pyramid Model in strategic plans
- ❖ Pyramid levels one and two implemented across all settings





Montana Early Care and Education Knowledge Base

A guide to professional early care and education practice:
what early childhood practitioners need to know, understand, and be able to do



2013



Knowledge Base Content Areas



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Introduction

The Montana Early Care and Education Knowledge Base is the foundation of Montana's career development system and was first published in 1997. The Knowledge Base underwent subsequent revisions in 2004 and 2008. The 2013 edition reflects major changes, including:

- An item analysis conducted by the Montana Early Childhood Higher Education Consortium and other Montana early childhood professionals was used to update and revise content areas and core competencies.
- The six standards for early childhood professional preparation established by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) are the framework for the content areas. "The standards provide a national vision for all early childhood professionals . . . define an essential common core of knowledge and practice for all training and education programs . . . [and] present a shared vision of excellence for all who work with young children." (NAEYC, 2012)
- Knowledge and competency related to cultural, linguistic, ethnic, and developmental diversity were previously embedded throughout the document and still are. However, now the competencies related to diversity are addressed directly within its own content area.
- The area of Health and Well-being has been substantially enhanced and now includes eleven categories with associated core competencies.
- Specific competencies related to the appropriate and meaningful use of technology in early childhood programs are embedded throughout the content areas.

This document embraces developmentally appropriate practice as explained in *Developmentally Appropriate Practice in Early Childhood Programs: Serving Children from Birth through Age 8* (NAEYC, 2009). While primarily focused on the competencies needed to effectively work with children birth to age 5, competencies often apply to teachers of children through age 8 and older.

In addition to professional preparation standards developed by NAEYC and NAEYC program accreditation, the competencies described in this document align with other professional standards and guidelines for quality early childhood programming, including the National Association for Family Child Care (NAFCC) Accreditation standards, Head Start Performance Standards, Environment Rating Scales (ERS), Program and Business Administration Scales

(PAS/BAS), and Montana's Early Learning Guidelines. For detailed information about what children ages birth to five years old should know, understand, and be able to do across the domains of development, see Montana's Early Learning Guidelines (revised, 2013). Montana's Early Learning Guidelines also include numerous examples of how adults can effectively support young children's growth and learning which are cross-referenced with the content areas and competencies included in this Knowledge Base.

■ Important Assumptions

The Knowledge Base is developed around certain overarching assumptions:

- The term "knowledge base" refers to the fundamental and evidence-based knowledge, skills, and practices essential for individuals who work with young children and their families. These essentials may also be referred to as core "knowledge," "competencies," "body of knowledge," etc.
- The Knowledge Base is not intended to assess at what level any particular individual's skills and abilities "should be," but rather to identify where his/her abilities and skills currently lie. In this manner, it serves as a comprehensive tool for setting goals and targeting ongoing professional development.
- The expertise of the adults who work with children and their families are the keys to quality. This is impacted not only by professional development but also by personal attributes or dispositions. While dispositions may seem difficult to measure and are often subjective, they critically impact the practitioner's effectiveness in the early childhood setting. In addition to reflecting upon their knowledge and skills, practitioners need to be able to examine their own personal characteristics. It helps when they understand that dispositions are active, dynamic, and subject to acquisition and growth.
- Many roles and settings exist within the early childhood profession. Regardless of the role or setting, effective work with young children requires core competencies that exist independent of program size/type or ages of children served.

Introduction (continued)

- E. The Knowledge Base allows for differentiating assessment. It is presumed that with increased experience, training, and responsibility, early childhood practitioners move toward more advanced knowledge, skills, and dispositions. However, it is also recognized that regardless of education and experience, practitioners find that their skills, dispositions, and knowledge vary based upon the criteria being assessed. For this reason, the Knowledge Base does not delineate a specific level of competence for any particular group (e.g., aides, teachers, directors).

■ Ways to Use the Knowledge Base

Introduction to the Early Childhood Field

Perusing the Knowledge Base content areas and statements of competency can serve as an introduction to the early childhood field. The wording and organization of the document exposes the early childhood practitioner—no matter what level of ability they have achieved—to language and standards currently recognized and used by the early childhood profession.

Becoming a Reflective Practitioner

One of the primary purposes of the Knowledge Base is to provide a basis for self-assessment and reflection about current knowledge, skills, and dispositions. Practitioners learn not only from their experiences but perhaps even more from reflecting upon these experiences. Reflection enables the practitioner to act in an intentional, deliberate, thoughtful manner rather than acting solely based on impulse, tradition, or guesswork. Reflective practitioners continually review their actions and beliefs in light of the children and families they serve. They also examine whether their practices align with professional standards and evidence-based approaches.

Practitioners may also reflect upon how they demonstrate each competency. For example, in reflecting upon the competency, “Incorporates families’ desires and goals for children into the program, as appropriate,” practitioners may ask themselves, “What are the desires/goals that the families I work with have for their children?” “How do I know?” “How do I collect this information?” “In what ways am I addressing these?” “Are there additional ways to do this?” “Why is this criteria important?”

Setting Professional Development Goals

By reflecting upon each content area and statements of competency in re-

lationship to their work, practitioners may determine areas of professional proficiency as well as areas needing further learning and growth. As areas needing improvement are identified during self-assessment, practitioners are encouraged to develop an Individualized Early Childhood Professional Development Plan that includes specific goals, strategies, and timelines (see Appendix B). The Plan helps practitioners engage in a systematic way to continue to learn and grow in the profession. By dating each regular self-assessment, practitioners can evaluate their achievement over time.

Planning Professional Development Experiences

- The Knowledge Base may be helpful to supervisors of teachers, staff, and students as they plan in-service training and help practitioners set professional goals.
- Professional development sponsors, Professional Development Specialists, trainers, and other instructors may benefit from using the Knowledge Base to guide workshop and course development.
- Professional development sponsors and educational programs may use the Knowledge Base to critique the types of professional development they are currently offering, to determine gaps, and to design further educational opportunities. Montana’s Early Childhood Training Approval System is based upon the Knowledge Base content areas.
- Prospective funders may wish to require those applying for grants to describe evidence of the specific Knowledge Base content areas and competencies addressed and how growth in these areas will be accomplished and measured.

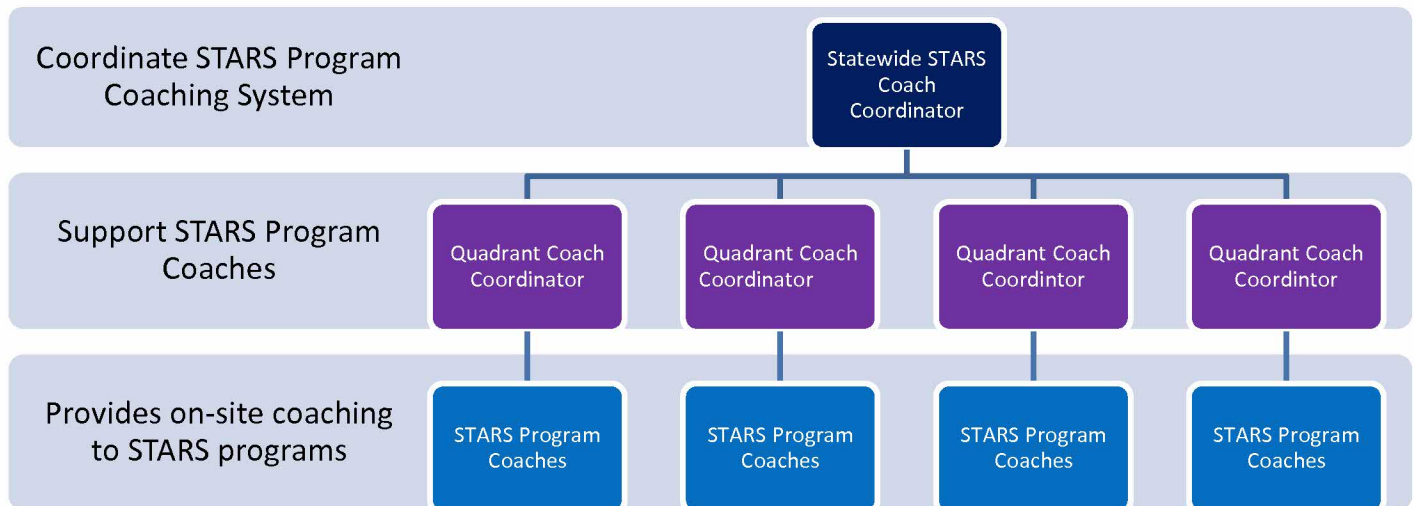
Other

- The results of Knowledge Base assessment are ideal for stating goals on applications for Professional Development Incentive Awards.
- The Knowledge Base competencies can be used to guide preparation for the Child Development Associate (CDA) assessment application.

NOTE: A number of competencies throughout this document include lists of materials or practices flagged by the term “such as.” Think of “such as” as meaning “including but not limited to.” In other words, the lists include examples related to the competency but should not be considered comprehensive or all inclusive.



Best Beginnings STARS to Quality Coaching System



Statewide Coach Coordinator: Coordinates STARS coaching system statewide ★ Plans annual and regular professional development and networking opportunities for quadrant & program coaches ★ Participates in coach hiring process ★ Facilitates continuous improvement by using evidence-based approaches to guide and support quadrant coaches ★ Partners with Early Childhood Project ★ Builds capacity ★ Models best practices in coaching ★ Collects and analyzes data using tools such as coaching logs, interviews, and surveys to inform quarterly & annual reporting ★ Works closely with Quality Rating Improvement System

Quadrant Coach Coordinators: Support STARS coaches in each quadrant ★ Build relationships and grow coaching network ★ Plan annual and regular professional development and networking opportunities for quadrant & program coaches in partnership with statewide coordinator ★ Build capacity ★ Provide resources for coaches ★ Collect and report data to statewide coordinator ★ Model best practices

STARS Program Coaches: Provide ongoing support at the program level, including coaching practitioners within their early childhood setting ★ Support practitioners to improve child outcomes ★ Build relationships and establish an environment and culture of best practices ★ Facilitate goal setting and planning ★ Model best practices on-site ★ Observe, assess, and provide feedback ★ Provide resources ★ Visit programs regularly ★ Maintain accurate records such as coaching logs and other documentation and report to quadrant coach coordinator

Kindergarten Readiness Indicators: MRSP Eligibility Criteria

The state of MT has five Double A districts. If the MSRP ran a subgrant competition that was birth through grade 12 for LEAs and Head Start programs, two or three of the Double A districts would receive most of the subgrant funds. We are basing the following scoring criteria on that factor and a similar successful process that was used with the Reading First subgrant competition. The scoring criteria will allow all districts in MT an opportunity for the funds, but also ensure larger districts are allowed enough schools to effectively implement a districtwide comprehensive literacy plan. To ensure the MSRP meets the statutory requirement of 15 percent of funds being subgranted to serve children from birth through age 5 in Head Start programs and district-operated special education preschools, 40 percent being subgranted to serve students in kindergarten through grade 5; and 40 percent being subgranted to serve students in middle and high school, including an equitable distribution of funds between middle and high schools, the following selection criteria and subgrant competition processes will be used. The eligibility criteria ensure that the successful subgrantees will meet Priority 1: Improving Learning Outcomes for disadvantaged students.

Eligible Applicants: Criteria for LEA eligibility:

- District has 50% or more students eligible for free/reduced price meals; or
- District has an on-time graduation rate of <80%. (5% below AYP benchmark of 85%)

AND, additionally, the LEA must meet one of the following:

- District has a low-income student group not meeting AYP target in Reading, or
- District is identified for Title I improvement; or
- District has >12% students with disabilities

Criteria for eligibility for schools within a district: (A district may only include up to two schools per grade span from elementary, one middle school, and one high school.

- School has 50% percent or more students eligible for free/ reduced price meals

AND, additionally, the school must meet one of the following:

- School has low-income student group not meeting AYP target in Reading, or
- School is identified for Title I improvement; or
- High school has an on-time graduation rate of <80%, or
- School is in a district with >12% students with disabilities

Eligible Applicants: Criteria for Early Learning Programs eligibility:

- Program is an established Head Start
- Program is an established Early Head Start